

ART PROMOTION IN NEW EUROPE - TOWARDS  
CULTURAL INTEGRATION : THE CASES OF POLAND  
AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Paulina Kolczynska

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Paulina KOLCZYNSKA

"Art Promotion in New Europe: towards cultural  
integration. The cases of Poland and the Czech Republic".  
(M.Phil thesis)

Supervisor  
Prof. Martin Kemp

St Andrews University

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1994.



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DECLARATIONS

I, Paulina Kolczynska hereby certify that this thesis which is approximately 34,000 words in length has been written by me, that is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student for the degree of M.Phil in Museum and Gallery Studies in October 1992, the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 1992-1994.

Date: <sup>16</sup>10 Dec 94 signature of candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate to the degree of M.Phil of the University of St Andrews and that she is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

date: 11 Jan 95. signature of supervisor

## ABSTRACT

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"Art promotion in New Europe: towards cultural integration. Cases of Poland and the Czech Republic" examines the situation in the cultural sector of these countries in the post 1989 era.

A comparison of Poland and the Czech Republic highlights the wide scope of the problems in improving the standards of contemporary art promotion and cultural exchanges in each country. The study provides information on the background already gained from professional experience within the informal institutions and by individuals whose contacts built the initial ground for international cooperation in both Poland and the Czech Republic. The administrative as well as the artistic problems are discussed.

The separate but very important issue of the commercial side of the effective international art promotion is also analyzed. Commercial contacts and the difficulties in building an art market in both countries, are studied with regard to problems in the international art dealing during the recession. Much of the evidence is drawn from interviews with Western and Eastern artists, dealers and arts organizers.

This thesis also looks at the changing cultural policy within the European Union and at new potentials for successful international cooperation with the individual member-to-be countries, and their formal and informal institutions. An

assessment of art promotion is explored with particular reference to the latest actions of the Council of Europe and the Commission of the European Communities.

New ways of cultural collaboration are also examined, based on the rising importance of the "regions" as administrative units within the European Union and their role in international and national arts programmes. The idea of cooperating regions is also used in this context as a direct way for non-member states to become natural part of the cultural exchanges, exploiting the geographical and historical ties.

Assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of contemporary art promotion in the new Europe is based on evidence gathered from both administrators and artists whose work has been affected by the changes since 1989. The thesis provides a diagnosis of the situation and gathers opinions of the professionals seeking improvements to facilitate a full cultural dialogue on an international basis.

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To my Parents.

Introduction. (includes summary of the thesis).

Since 1989 the fact that Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary will become full members of the European Union in the foreseeable future, despite of many objection has not been in doubt.

These candidates for membership at the EU have been asked to proceed with fundamental legislative, economic and political changes in order to match the standard of the rest of the Union. Those areas which do not meet EU requirements receive most of the aid and attention from governmental bodies in those former "Eastern Block" countries as well as from benefactors from the West. This has meant that the cultural sector has started to suffer underfunding, and a lack of cultural policy at governmental and regional levels has become obvious. Paradoxically, in the past, culture, and the arts in particular, had always been what had attracted the largest number of professionals and institutions from Western Europe. Thus over the years cultural connections had become very strong, although in the majority of cases informal ties were established. The field of contemporary art in particular has been an example of the continuous international cooperation, and this field became the gathering point for many professionals, like writers, art critics and philosophers and journalists. Thus if we are to examine one sector from one of these former Eastern European nations - in this case Poland - which has had a long tradition of international dialogue, it would quite naturally be culture and the arts. It is therefore culture and the arts which can be seen as important factor and

most natural platform for formal cooperation, spurring these nations towards a successful integration.

It will be important to remember that integration would firstly reach precisely that cultural sector, because naturally the economy and legislation, as well as the standard of infrastructure will take a lot longer to improve. This issue is specially important because within the process of integration into the EU itself, culture has been formally identified and accepted as the most powerful factor, assuring the common spiritual roots and identity of the Union.

Gradually since 1974 and throughout 1980's the role of the cultural sector was reviewed and the scope of the Community's cultural involvement widened. In practice it meant that cultural co-operation and culture received far more attention, which resulted in adding a new article to the Treaty of Rome in 1991, Maastricht Article 128 by Council of Europe. "Respect for the national and regional diversity and as well as the cultural heritage was brought to the fore".(1)

The European Community encouraged cooperation between Member States in areas such as the conservation of the cultural heritage, non-commercial cultural exchanges, meetings of professionals to discuss issues of common interests, transnational and innovative projects and consultations with the involvement of Regional Committee. The most important aspect of this encouragement can be described as taking responsibility and contributing to the protection and support of artistic and cultural creation. This development of formal



policy, seen in the light of difficult interrelations between East and West, has become an extremely important platform of dialogue. Thus cultural integration, in the post 1989 era, has always been seen as the initial step towards full membership of the EU by its candidates and by the EU authorities. At this stage it is important to remember that the role of culture as the power which may influence other policies and programmes has been underestimated, even within EU and also in Polish and Czech official policy.

Nevertheless there has been a change in the approach to culture which has had a great influence on the shaping of Europe.

The concept of cultural heritage has been replaced by the idea of cultural pluralism at a local or regional level.(2) This has modified the focus of European political integration by stating the importance of the region. This is the most significant example of the role of culture in reorganizing priorities. This is also a major remodelling from Europe of countries to a Europe of regions.

This shift of priorities carries a special message for Central and Eastern European countries. In order to keep up with further development Poland and other countries have to adapt to the new model of independent and dynamic regions and learn to take their own initiative in future planning. This is specially difficult for the former Eastern European countries, due to nearly half a century of centralized government. Again it is the cultural sector which may build new relations and bring innovations by undertaking initiatives concerning

international regional co-operation. In spite of restrictions even non-member states may participate in international projects and benefit from them. Ideas like International Cultural Month were specially designed to give an opportunity for an unrestricted, wide collaboration.

This new structure and new level of collaboration is helping to reduce over four decades of isolation between Central and Eastern Europe and hopefully will contribute to the better understanding of their common identity and will also encourage "group to group dialogue".(3) These are essential factors for the progress towards successful European integration.

The direction of change is difficult to predict due to the rapid changes to the whole "European concept". The past half a decade has brought everything from great enthusiasm and a great urge to fill the gaps of communication between East and West, a need for a well coordinated European Union framed by the law and aims of the Maastricht Treaty, to the slow withdrawal from the idea of "one Europe" to the idea of a two-tier Europe proposed by Germany in September 1994.(4) However the situation is so unstable that the problem concerning the integration of the Central and Eastern Europe remains.

In spite of the internal difficulty of the European Community and the virtually outdated Maastricht Treaty, it is absolutely vital for Central European countries to become members of an enlarged Europe. Even if we consider the possibility "of dismantling the European Union" (the

disintegration process) which would remove the now artificial division between eastern and western Europe, "the same legal footing" would still be applicable to individual countries, thus even then the role of the culture as a medium of communication and collaboration among the countries will not be obsolete.(5)

Culture provides the most flexible and not too financially demanding form of cooperation, ahead in many cases of formal policies and agreements.

Culture has been discussed in this work for a simple reason: mainly to show that the first step towards integration and collaboration has already been made and that there is a great potential to further the process of integration.

This thesis on " Art promotion in "new Europe": towards cultural integration. The cases of Poland and the Czech Republic", examines the ground for the successful international cooperation in the area of the individual countries and their formal and informal institutions, regions and their potential within international and national cultural programmes.

In the case of Poland the ground for international co-operation is based on insight gained within independent galleries, traditionally cradles for Polish contemporary art. Of major importance is the interest shown in Polish contemporary art, as creating both international interest and informal contacts especially before 1989. This chapter also explains the reasons for innovatory practice and theory of art in Poland, while the second part of the study investigates the

role of the artist and the areas which need to be improved in order to allow Polish artists to enter the international stage in the new era post 1989.

The case study of the Czech Republic is based mainly on the situation in Prague as it is the most advanced cultural centre in the country. Prague is also examined as the "capital city" of Central Europe. Thus the current and past political situation has been taken into consideration, presenting the roots and background of Czech contemporary art. The issues of improvement for art promotion are made in comparison to the situation in Poland versus the Czech Republic, showing at the same time different needs of both countries.

Problems of Central European countries are also discussed in the light of regional collaboration. The idea of the cooperating regions may work as a practical and direct way for non-member states to become part of the exchanges due to the geographical and historical ties, thus examples from eastern and western Europe have been discussed. Apart from the political issues, the idea of improving the arts sector through regional initiatives was used as a vehicle for the international art promotion and sponsorship.

This work also inspects the situation of Central European contemporary art in the international art markets by exploring positive and negative aspects of commercial dealings.

The first Eastern European Art Fair in Hamburg ( 9-12 December 1993) illustrates the current difficulties in the marketing side of eastern European art. This example is based entirely on the interviews with gallery managers who for years have

been interested in Polish, Czech and Russian artists. Their professional comments on the needed improvements in Central Europe are a valuable guide to further collaboration.

The last chapter is devoted to the international formal institutions facilitating direct cultural integration between eastern and western Europe.

The appropriate advancement of policy and legislation within these institutions, without which integration will never be fully realised, has been analyzed.

This study was based on the latest action of the Council of Europe, the Commission of European Communities, and more directly involved bodies like the European Cultural Foundation, and the European Forum for Arts & Heritage.

The research discusses also the problem of the creation of an artistic lobby which would provide strong opinions, influencing the policy-making centre on an international level.

The scope of art promotion in a new Europe, under new circumstances must be discussed in such a wide frame as in the thesis. The advantages and disadvantages of art promotion in the Czech Republic must be based on the commercial and non-commercial expertise gained from the environment of those countries, due to the direct inter-relations of many disciplines with the art promotion itself, and due to still undecided final shape of Europe.

The role of the private organisations and individuals must also be underlined as important to the political changes because without their initiative the process would not have

even begun.

This thesis does not aim to give final answers or an idea of policy structure, but by gathering this knowledge and these opinions will hopefully contribute to the massive work on bridging the gap between two parts of the same continent, which for over forty years were pushed apart.

The most important aspect of this work remains the diagnosis of the situation and the information, which hopefully will be useful to all who would seek partnership in arts of Poland and the Czech Republic.

The thesis aims also to work on a more global level, showing the power of culture as a medium for long term dialogue between different nations and its role in European integration. This particular example as well as the whole work supports the idea of strong Parliamentary representation for the art world in Europe and further.

As the aim of the thesis has been to examine the latest developments in the art promotion and in the sector of international cultural affairs I have decided to relay mostly on the opinions of the professionals. Old documents and discussions made a good background and helped me to understand the mechanism of the European cultural integration, but this sector specifically lacks well-edited current documents, which would survive rapid changes. Very helpful in this case were lectures and meetings at the Chatham House, Royal Institute of International Affairs, where there was a possibility for an open discussion with the guest speaker.

In case of the arts I tried to follow the most significant

events concerning East-West cooperation and interview organizers and guests. The perfect example is the Venice Biennale, which also was the meeting place of all directors of the Soros Foundation Centres from all over Europe. Other significant events were as follows: the Eastern European Art Fair in Hamburg, and the exhibition in Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, Europa, Europa and the Conference at Canterbury University devoted to "New Alignments in Visual Arts". Taking advantage of language similarities I managed to carry interesting interviews with the gallery managers and artists in Prague. Naturally Warsaw, Lodz and Cracow in Poland became great source of information due to kind co-operation of artists like Wlodzimierz Pawlak and Zbigniew Libera and the gallery managers like Wieslaw Borowski (Foksal Gallery) and Marta Tarabula (Zderzak Gallery).

Among the foreign galleries the most important in my research is the experience and professionalism of the Walter Storms Gallery where I was introduced to the biggest German collectors like Lenz Schonberg and I could supervise the production of the catalogues in Cantz Publication in Stuttgart.

Nevertheless in order to understand fully the nature of the international art promotion I decided to develop artistic projects myself. The exhibition I managed to organize with help of the City Arts Centre in Edinburgh called "Polish Roots, British Soil", gave me an understanding of the work directly with the artists on the presentation of the foreign culture. This has helped me later to embark on the project

with the Polish Business Centre and coordinate the exhibition of the inter-regional dimension called the "Business of art". Practical knowledge gave me better expertise and confidence to cooperate with the artistic publication and media.

So far I have managed to publish with "Art & Design" on Polish contemporary art and Central European issues. My cooperation with the media gave me opportunity to produce short programme on the facilitating of the cultural exchanges within the arts sector for BBC World Service, Polish Section.

I hope to continue and develop further my work and skills as an arts organizer and critic.



Notes:

1. Jean Dondelinger, Commission of the European Communities Fact sheet, Strassburg, 1989.
2. Herman Lube, 'Regionalismus pro Europa? Politik und Kultur in grossen und kleinen Raumen' in: Universitas. Zeitschrift fur interdisziplinare Wissenschaft, Stuttgart, October 1992.
3. Telephone interview with Dr Antony Polonsky, Brandeis University, Boston, London, 25th September 1994.
4. Wolfgang Wessels, 'Rationalizing Maastricht: the search for an optimal strategy of the new Europe', in: International Affairs, Vol.70 No.3 July 1994, pp. 445-458.
5. *ibid.* 4

## CHAPTER 1.

### Part A - "Polish realities" - overview from 1970's till 1989. Examining the ground for the international co-operation.

A diagnosis of the current situation in the private sector and sector of the formal institutions in Poland working on art promotion will be presented on the basis of the experience, history and current activities of the galleries and individuals. Analysis of the importance of the socio-economic situation will be playing a significant role here.

The role of the artists as animators of the artistic life in the country also has been taken into consideration, in the cases of the post-Martial Law debuts within the figurative art and of the youngest generation shaping the styles of the 1990's. Here the artistic styles developed simultaneously with the Western Europe are being discussed as non-conventional means of international cooperation.

The long term existence of some centres as well as the more ephemeral exhibiting spaces will be taken into consideration within specific and unstable political environments to show the degree of interest, commitment and creativity in contemporary art in Poland, which provides an exceptional ground for international symposiums, cultural exchange and co-operation.

The private gallery (or rather the so called "curator's choice" exhibiting space) from the very beginning of its appearance in post-war Poland has been building a base for the spontaneous presentation of contemporary art and trying to introduce the new ideas through the most objective and

professional workshops. During each decade, beginning with the 1960's, although differing strongly because of the type of the socio-political context, galleries have concentrated on cardinal methodological approaches to interpretation and discussion of the emerging styles and media. The aim was clear, to make a more dynamic artistic life and to build strong methodological bridge which would to help incorporate Polish contemporary art in the stream of the significant changes taking part in the rest of the world, with a strong focus on Western Europe and United States. The importance of the establishing of independent galleries in country a like Poland before 1989 has been enormous because of the need to provide alternative exhibiting and meeting spaces, different to the formal, controlled, censored or simply dull and badly managed galleries which belonged to the state. The informal institution stood against the bureaucratic and operational schemes in the formal organisations within the artistic life in the country. Artistic life in Poland found "actual space and neutral ground" for development in the side streams provided by the existence of the private galleries. A fully dynamic development of such centres on a bigger scale began in the seventies, no doubt under the influence of what has been happening in America and Western Europe.

The situation on both continents can be described as general lack of trust in the effectiveness and policies of the formal institutions. Strong voices raised against the corrupted art market, subjective art criticism and misinterpretations of the art in the West lead to dramatic

protests which found most responsive circles in Poland, where these problems had been highlighted by the need for active participation in the creative and administrative sectors without artificial obstacles of a political or bureaucratic nature.

The creation of the most innovative, alternative exhibiting spaces started at the beginning of the 1970's. As anti-institutional spaces, newly established galleries found their basis in a small environments. Sometimes these comprised private apartments of the artists and the art critics; sometimes they occupied bigger places, recognized as part of the other institutions and attached to larger buildings (e.g. space within the University building). This kind of informal system within the country naturally was not getting the attention of any kind of means of official publicity and was denied recognition. Due to lack of publicity, movements were restricted to limited artistic and academic circles. Paradoxically at the same time those micro-artistic centres gained wide interest abroad, mainly in France and Germany because of the interpersonal contacts of the artists themselves and art critics.(1) That recognition and the natural linkages arose because the styles of the conceptual art which were developing abroad were comparable to those of artists and galleries in Poland. This factor has been so far the most powerful in the understanding of the "philosophy and belief" able to unite artists and help them to co-operate. In this case the actual artistic climate and the way of realising conceptual art provided support for the idea of the "gallery"

in Poland itself. The "gallery" came to be understood not only as an exhibiting space but also as a place for the animation and discussion of art which became influential as a model later on. The majority of those new places also brought to light foreign artists, especially conceptual ones and all those working in the offsprings of the post-avantgarde styles. Visits, discussions and projects in a natural way inspired and helped to confront philosophies of art and the practice. Many of the workshops and discussions resulted in proper gallery documentation and publication. The gallery became a platform for occasional or frequent co-operation to enable artists to experiment and to work together on the emerging ideas.

The various private galleries can be divided into specific groups, which may be characterised as :

1. anti-gallery spaces ( underlining their non-institutional character)
2. galleries working strictly on new ideas alone (as types of laboratories)
3. galleries concentrating on documentation and commenting on alternative and experimental approaches ( as repositories of knowledge and interpretations of the newest achievements in the visual arts).(2)

The variety of approaches needed to accommodate a stream of dynamic development seemed to stimulate very well prepared workshops where ideas transmitted from the West were discussed, interpreted and retaught in order to obtain transformed version which either would enrich artistic growth at home or simply be adopted without obvious local

implications. Gallery "space" became source of independence and development for free artistic expression as well as a cradle for objective and creative art criticism.(3) Experimental activity of a conceptual origin related to autonomous artistic searching involved "objective techniques of the structure of the picture like photography and video".(4)

Art was growing directly from art; from thinking about art; from experimental values, and from speculation on the value of artistic ideas. Discussions concerning the artistic subject itself were rooted in the ideas of conceptual art, fluxus and performance, where an important role was played by the semantics of the concrete and meta-artistic poetry. The most significant examples were the activity of the Gallery Tak/Nie (Gallery Yes/No) established by Anastazy Wisniewski in 1970 at the same time as The Office of Poetry run by Andrzej Partnum.(5) The first one in an ironical way commented on the formally supported and recognized art in the country. Artistic action stylistically close to the happening enabled the artist fully to express bitter irony.

Abstract aspects of the specific action like the "concert on ten thousand birds all over the country", or the open air exhibition on a Bydgoszcz highway added new dimensions to events. The new dimension has been underlined by the actual media (in case of the concert, it was a voice and partly the announcement of it) and the content of the work of art where the critical layer has been broadened by the metaphysical part of the action. Contrary to the Gallery Tak/Nie, the Office of

Poetry which concentrated principally on the written exchange of artistic ideas, although it was later transformed into a place of meetings for Polish and foreign artists. There were centres like the Gallery A-4 of Andrzej Pierzgalski and the Gallery 80 x 40 of Jerzy Trelinski, or the Art Gallery of the Creative Information of Jan Chwalczyk, which contributed to the independent artistic flow for the discussion of ideas. However as stated by Dr Grzegorz Dziamski the most systematic input was made by the "Gallery Akumulatory" run by Jaroslaw Kozlowski in Poznan, who during the years of 1972-1981 organized over 100 exhibitions and 20 conferences. There the theory became part of the practice. Art philosophy was developing simultaneously with the actual object. "Akumulatory" provided the ground for the further growth of new post conceptual ideas. The Gallery presented many foreign artists like : Victor Burgin, Richard Long, Lawrence Weiner, Yutaka Matsuzawa, as well as, the best Polish post avant-garde representatives.(6) Cooperating with the foreign dealers and curators, the gallery established long term links which worked well even after the place has been closed with the outbreak of Martial Law (13th of December 1981). It will be worth mentioning at this point that very often those independent centres worked in co-operation with one another giving a chance for the same artists to show in more than one "gallery".

Some artists from the Office of Poetry were also showing at the galleries : Repassage, Dziekanka, Mospan, Maximal Art, Art Forum. New media as well as new means of expressions had

been tested specially in the "Gallery Repassage", established by Elzbieta and Emil Cieslar. The artistic credo of the gallery was based on the idea of the "open form" by Oscar Hansen, where a bigger importance was placed on a paratheatrical action than on the physical object itself. Inspirations and ideas of artistic action were confronted directly with the life of the city. Later on those ideas expanded to the art of film production although the main policy remained the same. Throughout their activity the gallery concentrated on the exploration of the direct relations between artists and society. At a time (and also today) it was crucial to attempt integrate everyday life art and artists, in order to show the importance of the art in life of free and creative society. Gallery Repassage also concentrated on showing the need to change the division between the institutions of life and institutions of art, which aimed for change at the fundamental order of the society. Not only the mentality or the relations in everyday life were meant to change but also the structures of the institutions, in order to give equal attention to the offices serving the cultural life. All those changes meant to pave the way to activate society itself to be more responsive and more innovative in the process of the art creation.

In this case art could be almost seen as type of a therapy helpful to regain imagination by the oppressed society. At the same time art became useful and through this immediate place in the society could demand more attention which would improve its promotion and conditions of life of



the artists themselves.

Very complicated problems of sociological and political matters did not prevent further development of the fully autonomous styles based on purely artistic and philosophical ideas. The "Gallery Krzysztofory" since 1955 became the place of developing theatrical and paratheatrical action by Tadeusz Kantor and the Cricot Theatre in Cracow. Other media presented at one time (in the 1970's) came closer towards the photoart which was presented at the Gallery Dziekanka in Warsaw. The introduction of the new "objectified" means of expression like film and photography were characteristic of the centres in Lodz and provided a fascinating ground for the Polish / foreign sessions and meetings.

As mentioned before, conceptual art and art of a conceptual background also gave an opportunity to work on a different type of notion of the texts, ranging from the verbal to the visual message.

Photodocumentation, photoanalysis, instalations, actions, happenings, video performances and experimental films became the most popular media throughout 1970's. Photography became new means of recording and articulating, a tool for analysis and self analysis for art. What is interesting is that photographic picture became a mark of the idea and its quality as a photograph did not matter any more, as in the shows at the "Gallery Photo-Art", "Mala Gallery" and "GN" from Gdansk. At the same time, painting was neglected almost completely and regarded as too traditional; a medium, which had been totally explored in all its artistic uses. To a certain extent the

type of media used, became a measurement of the contemporary approach. That kind of attitude had also very important explanation. These were actually the years when, through the frequent contacts with foreign artists and different artistic workshops, Polish artists acquired a strong feeling of their European and international identity. Finally due to the redirected ideas and through the process of learning and discussions, there arose an opportunity to adopt very critical outlook on what had been happening to date in Poland concerning the exhibiting policies of the state galleries. The innovative and independent structures which confronted the old and politically influenced centres highlighted the artificial hierarchies and divisions even more strongly. The artistic ground or rather underground was ready to restructure and reorder Polish art world. The main weakness lay in the short ephemeral existence of the majority of these exhibiting spaces, which reflected the structural and economical weaknesses of the whole country. Today, from the perspective of the nearly thirty years (from the warming up of the political atmosphere in Poland after death of Stalin in 1953), there are definitely two places which managed to continue their activity in unchanged manner. There is the Gallery Foksal established in 1966 and run by two art critics, Wiesław Borowski and Andrzej Turowski. It became one of the platforms for cooperation and was the first to concentrate on the documentation of contemporary developments. Theory, treated as the most important tool to the interpretation, found its centre of refinement in this Warsaw gallery. What is most

important is that throughout those few decades the Foksal Gallery managed to attract many foreign art critics (like Pierre Rastany) and curators who later became directors of galleries (like Nicholas Serota, today director of the Tate Gallery). The gallery also built a very important chain of connections with other Western Institutions that were interested in Polish contemporary art, such as the ICA in London.(7)

Knowledge became more rounded with respect to the variety of opinions and information held by groups of people working in similar fields and with similar interests from all over Europe as a result of the connections of the Foksal Gallery, and this very methodical way of working became one of the biggest achievements of the gallery.

The types of the private galleries created in Poland, due to their style and way of functioning, which is very specific for their time and place, and are not precisely paralleled in the West and East. The socio-political structures and ideas of the organizers shaped these centres, which to a certain extent could be compared with the "off centre" galleries and types of alternative spaces, where the political and commercial pressure has been reduced to minimum and where spontaneous contacts led to interesting experiments.(8) Although the scope of these independent galleries in Poland had been quite restricted, nevertheless all those artists and individuals interested in participating managed to co-ordinate exchange of the exhibitions. In some cases, like the Polish post-war exhibition of contemporary art shown in Essen in 1962 and

again in 1965, they had particularly entrepreneurial values. Art managed to cross the borders well ahead of politics and sometimes against it. Action on the biggest scale which exemplifies that point was the activity of relatively independent institution mentioned earlier, the Muzeum of Modern Art in Lodz run by Ryszard Stanislawski. This is the only "formal art institution" which, due to its director was able to contribute to the overall struggle for post-avant garde art in fully European dimension in Poland. Its importance lay particularly in enhancing Western awareness that there is good contemporary art in Poland and also that there are artists with whom cooperation may bring benefits for both parties. Again it will be worth stressing that the exchanges were not on a massive scale, but later provided something which could be seen as a tradition of going to Poland and experimenting.(9) This proved to be fruitful in next few years. An example is the biggest international show organized in Poland, the one in Lodz which invited the co-operation of Polish and foreign artists and was co-ordinated by Ryszard Wasko (the video artist) in 1981. The exhibition gathered over 50 artists and attracted the help and attention of the Independent Workers Union. Although the event only lasted from 26th of October until 15th of November, it should be regarded as one of the most spectacular victories of the independent curators, artists and private exhibition spaces.(10) This victory may be analyzed on two basic levels, firstly as an art promotion in a difficult political and economical situation, and secondly as a demonstration of the

role of art in society. "Solidarity" adopted the idea of Polish constructivism that "artist cannot be vain ornament of the society, the artist must co-operate in organization of life" (Mieczyslaw Szczuka leading Polish constructivist).

During that event it was determined by the participating artists that the sense and idea of such an event should be maintained in the future as the essential fact of co-existence between artists in different social conditions.(11)

The building of the contemporary art scene and new structures had been very complex from the very beginning in almost all spheres concerned with art promotion and the new structures, which were needed. That is why the interest of the curators and organizers also concentrated on the improvement of the relations between society and art world, as well as the maintaining close relationships among the artists from different social conditions in the East and West. All this effort aimed to replace artificial structures which started interfering too much in artistic and non-artistic life in Poland. This activity helped later in sustaining Polish presence in the international art scene when the whole country was frozen from the time of the imposition of the Martial Law on the 13th December 1981. The majority of the independent galleries were forced to close by the official authority as less "comfortable" and excessively dynamic centres which were interfering openly in the cultural and internal politics of the state. A large number of artists and intelligentsia left the country and the shock of suppressed life made its mark on the society.

Just a couple of weeks later, on 4th of January 1982, a member of "Construction in Process" pointed out in a significant way that: "a good deep art is not for others at the beginning; it is for ourselves. First of all there is identity of your own. This is the reason why there is no difference between Eastern and Western art".(12) This very simple statement underlined perhaps the greatest achievement resulting from the co-operation and exchange of the information. An "unknown" part of Europe, Eastern Europe, thus becomes natural part of the artistic process without divisions on a East-West basis, but only on the basis of good or bad art.

After 1983 the movement and initiative of the small galleries started growing again. What had been built throughout the 1970's partially perished but was also transformed by new circumstances and new needs. Relying on the tradition of the small galleries and little spaces in private flats, many artists and curators sought for independent places, while some turned for help and patronage to the Church. A small group decided to work with the formal, state institutions.

The biggest asset at the post-Martial Law "era" were contacts worked out since late 1960's which helped a lot in the process of rebuilding independent structures. Conditions remained very hard as there had not been an art market at all and the occasional possibility of an international exhibition was of limited help. Naturally the individual initiatives mostly involved very little or no finance for the

participants. They relied on good will and spontaneous interest more than anything else.

One of the new galleries which provided a possibility to exhibit the young generation was the "Zderzak Gallery" established in 1985 by Marta Tarabula. This was a gallery without censorship, without publicity, without working hours. Spontaneous action meetings and discussions gathered artists, students and art historians on each occasion. All the exhibitions gave a unique atmosphere which helped to articulate the art of the difficult decade of the 1980's. Art and the interpretation of it was enriched by the direct confrontation of the points of view of the artists and guests of the gallery in discussion.(13) The gallery started exhibiting paintings as the most appropriate artistic medium. The "Zderzak", as well as the "Dziekanka" gallery, underlined a certain comeback of painting in the changed atmosphere of the early 1980's. As pointed out by Włodzimierz Pawlak, a member of the Gruppa (an artistic group of the painters established in 1983), "painting and especially figurative painting, seemed to be the best visual language to express all the problems and feelings which arose during the difficult years during and after Martial Law".(14) Meta-artistic discussions concerning the work of art itself were no longer sufficient within the needs and atmosphere of Polish society. The new situation demanded a highly defined artistic language and fully legible artistic signs. What was mostly needed in the Polish art world was a change, which the older generation could not answer because of an overall crisis in the modernist



avantgarde, which was struggling with a lack of innovative vision. In 1985 the "Galeria Mlodych" was established in Warsaw by Pawel Susid who recalls those years as a time of significant change in artistic circles. The development of the "new expression" recognized some kind of hunger in Western Europe for the painting as such. The crisis of the avant-garde in Poland had strong parallels in Western Europe, where widely understood problems of "artistic autonomy, the status of the work of art and the principles of creative action" needed to be revived in order to create new structures.(15)

Poland was a site of endless discussions and uncertainty concerning the possibility of creation after conceptual and media art. Susid points out events which influenced the search for most appropriate artistic media.

The establishing of free trade union "Solidarity" and the tragedy of Martial Law made a great impact on the acceptance of the painting again. This has been the language of the painting which allowed to express hopes and fears of Polish artists speaking for the rest of the society.

What is of interest here is the timing of the stylistic change in Poland, coinciding with the stylistic change in the West. The years 1983-1985 witnessed the figurative painting revivals in Germany (Neue Wilde), and Scotland (Glasgow Pups), Italian "Arte Cifra", French "Figuration libre", and "New Image Painting" from America.(16) In Poland younger artists newly graduated or still at the Fine Arts Academy did not hesitate to set aside avant-garde paradigms in order to respond directly to events. The national tragedy of Martial



Law demanded an artistic reaction with the capacity to do full justice to the present. (Plate 1.)

Galleries similar to "Zderzak" concentrated on traditional media presented by the artists with fresh and non-conformist outlooks. The artistic interests and development of the new exhibiting spaces began the important task of bridging the art of 1970's and 1980's, and it will be appropriate to see them as providers of valuable platforms. They succeeded in securing a smooth continuation of previously recognized styles, and gave a chance to the controversial language of figurative painting. An example is provided in the "Gallery Wielka 19" from Poznan. Extremely active during 1976-1981, after two years of silence, it reopened in 1983. As a supporter of the foto-art and the mail-art in 1983, it responded to the new needs of the young artists, giving them space and the possibility to show works. The most important development seemed to be the active symbiosis of the style preferred during 1970's and the new views presented by independent young Poznan artists. In another words, "Wielka 19" managed to accommodate the installations by Mirosław Balka as well as the painterly works of "Gruppa", representing the new wave of figurative painting.

The other gallery which managed to work out its image, based on the most interesting approaches, towards the visual language of previous decade, was "Gallery Wschodnia" in Lodz. This time it was not the gallery space but the tradition and the nearby film school which ensured equal presentation of both art in the informal styles and in the traditional media.

As usual the philosophy of art in Poland, influenced by the context of life itself, demanded a specific approach, involving the ability to discuss art in two different dimensions as means of communicating freedom and artistic expression. Each of the galleries in order to be creative and function as independent centres needed to be living exhibiting spaces. Gallery Dziekanka in Warsaw under the dynamic curatorship of Joanna Kiliszek reopened after Martial Law in 1983.(17) The flexibility of the management in assuming responsibility for the new gallery helped to prepare an interesting programme, accommodating painterly expression of the years 1983-1986 and more interdisciplinary approaches after 1986. Spontaneity and freshness as well as the quality of originality in thinking became something of trade mark, and the biggest asset of all these places. They "did not shape the character of the art or the taste of the public. They also did not shape the art market. Their achievements lie in showing and supporting what was recent and alive, taking as a main criteria openness towards interesting movements".(18) They also managed to provide artists with a specific "micro -world" free from the pressures of events, and working towards self-realisation and a dynamic of imaginative development, balancing at the same the need to address outside reality. Escape was also possible thanks to systematic reappraisal of studio practices by the artists themselves. Ryszard Grzyb a member of "Gruppa", said in 1983:

"Painting does not restrict itself to the problems of composition and colour. Painting just this is something

indescribable and absurd. If someone's occupation is a painter then that is an absurd aim in this country and in this time".(19)

A distancing from conventional artistic action opened up new fields of thought which Wozniak described as the deprivation of painting of its classic elements. In other words the opening of new semantic and aesthetic perspectives became the main way of answering the problems of artist and viewer. In many cases, as Piotr Krakowski observed, religious and patriotic subjects were mythologised and radicalised in a specific way. "Irony, tragic and at the same time comic and paradoxical discussions, paintings on paper, ephemera, drawings and ludic actions became the main means of artistic expression".(20) In the case of paintings, "Territory - Poland" was the starting point of the individual observations, judgements and reinterpretations, and the only place which could accept them was the independent or private gallery. In order to achieve truthfulness of figure and sign, young independent painters attempted a widespread re-evaluation in the difficult fields of culture, religion and Polish history. Thanks to the ratification of these cultural spheres, they managed to grasp hidden mechanisms and structures ruling outer and inner reality. It is also worth mentioning that even tough artists worked strongly within their time, and the frames of their activity were drawn by the space (territory) in which they worked. They also, nevertheless, retained some independence from this framework. Newly rediscovered styles, which brought so much inspiration to the young artists all

over Europe, also became the most appropriate language in Poland. The means involved mixing layers of artistic ideas with religious and ethical references, so that their painting not only mirrored reality but also twisted it. In Sobczyk, works with religious metaphors were confronted by strong sexual allusion. By emphasising aspects of reality (with an element of dismissiveness and simplification of figure) the artist more than underlines his non-conformist approach towards the existing state of values in Poland. Multi-figure and multi-zone iconography with condensed rhetoric exceeded and subverted the space of reality. Sobczyk built a more universal world through communicated truths which exceeded the privacy of the individual and at the same time inspired a belief in the reality of post- Martial Law Poland.(21)

Symbols of Christianity and unexpected associations appeared also in the painting of Ryszard Grzyb and Ryszard Wozniak. Wozniak operates with metaphors of sign and figure shown in gestures and ironic representations, but in this case the political context has been mixed with symbolic archetypes. Grzyb in his iconography bridges social and political commentary with religious elements where folk motifs, masks, and simple eroticism build a very straightforward language.

"Figures mean what they represent", important elements of dismissiveness articulate a strong criticism of Polish society, pointing out both its faults as well as more general human failings."(22) A second important field of rhetorical painterly discussion (as mentioned earlier) addresses history.

Works by Grzyb and Kowalewski undertake interpretations

of historic themes from the point of view of the relations between history, tradition, and everyday life. The style of Kowalewski has been described by Anda Rottenberg as "painfully simple and defencelessly pure painterly language".(23) Historic problems and confrontations with political realities are presented with a directness and unambiguity which shocks the viewer.

Diagnosis of the material and spiritual state of the country has also been conducted in a language, which, in its privacy and relaxed attitudes, affirms kind of artistic independence from outer realities. This was possible in the independent exhibiting spaces, where a different audience waited with expectations of new, radical answers.

This can be seen in the works of Modzelewski, who accumulated meaningless figures and emblematic signs, where ill-defined gestures and abstract details chase after real phenomena. Their echoes support what Paul Ricoeur calls the figure's ability to "overcome the silence, overcome growing amnesia with the use of empty signs" like empty words when values have been questioned. Articulation of the figure has been centrally important in the Polish context: "To see the cruel and fascinating face of the world - or to see the mask and understand that we are equal elements of its totality. Stripped from our skin to the same degree as stripping (others) equally hidden as revealed."(24) This guilt and the responsibility for addressing and articulating social and moral problems were the central concern. That is why even very controversial pieces were actually allowed to be shown in the

private spaces and in the spaces which belonged to the Church. The works of Włodzimierz Pawlak are the best examples. His works have been built on emergence and disappearance in a field of sketchy figures. Contrary to Sobczyk, Pawlak's figures are not repainted; they are painted over. Destroyed gestures function as a perfect metaphor for what was described earlier as the mystery of the "equally hidden and revealed" truth of the reality. The self-destructive gesture here affirms the importance of signs on the walls of Polish cities which had been painted over by the authorities during Martial Law. The symbolic expression of destruction and auto-profanation are also signals of a negative approach towards the order of the outer reality. The destroying gesture becomes the sign of time. References to the substance of this gesture generalise the specific historic time from which they come. This gesture can be seen as very strong form of protest against thoughtless violence in the general human dimension. A bond with present modernity is also shown by paintings on paper which enable artist to "grasp spontaneity of time".(25) Painting on paper acquired a very special meaning. (Plate 2.) Firstly it was innovative through being introduced by Modzelewski and the Grupa after their visit Dusseldorf, in Germany, in 1984 where new styles and artistic discoveries were confronted during their short scholarship. Later, the whole formation presented their works in Kassel (Halle K 18) in 1987. Their style and way of expression supported the general climate of destruction and the courage of admitting nonsense and affirming the unimportance of the art object

itself. Pawlak actually encouraged the viewers to walk on his painted papers at the Dziekanka Gallery. This type of creativity also underlines relationships with post-avantgarde art and the surrounding discussions.

The strength of young artists lies in a strong voice which breaks through politics and artistic borders. The most important aspects of this is the style worked out by Gruppa based on strategies of auto-irony, shocking effects and dismissiveness which were very valuable artistic tools in the face of the moral destruction wrought by Martial Law. Thanks to these tools artists survived the pressure of society and reality. This ironic dimension revealed reality without creating tiresome ambiguity. It "killed its mask, and gave a meaning to the figure".(26) The ironic formulae of laughter and scream are recognised (with its origin in the joke) as a form of anxiety. This full articulation of anxiety and fear has been shown with maturity in the paintings of the Gruppa, as a universal criticism of present times. They also make possible the invasion of a new artistic truth, which bridges the remaining gap between "picture and logos". Finally it could be said that the most important general achievement of the Gruppa lies in the ability to find fresh stylistic and rhetorical formulae which locate the bond between the art work and territory in historical and sociological analysis. They are also the first to gain success and attention among the young generation of the 1980's graduates who managed to show and cooperate abroad. They are also perfect examples of the successful mutual effort of artists and curators to transmit



further search for personal truth in the country marked by the conditions of Martial Law.

The working conditions, although hard, did not discourage either Polish or foreign artists who sought opportunities for exchanges and dialogues. Natural contacts developed once more on the ground of the shared interests and artistic preferences. Among the best known artists, Joseph Beuys, Ben Vautrier, Lawrence Weiner, Royden Rabinowitch, and later David Mach and Anselm Kiefer, became frequent guests of the Foksal Gallery. While the Dziekanka Gallery and Zderzak Gallery kept in touch with younger and less known artists. Of course still at this stage it has been impossible to say that the traffic of art exchanges from Britain or Germany to Poland became as popular as those to France, Italy or even Spain. The progress and the main importance lay in the general knowledge within the artistic circles that such co-operation is possible and that it brings a lot to both parties. Both sides could readily learn from one another. One of the innovations offered in Poland was the model of the gallery as purely for discussions and experimenting in theory and practice of the artistic workshop, which was for instance extremely interesting in the director of the Matt's Gallery Robin Klassnik. There is also the example of successful middleman provided by the "Akumulatory Gallery" from Poznan run by Jaroslaw Kozlowski, working afterwards for many years with Klassnik in London. Soon "Akumulatory" became known in Germany, by reaching an understanding with a gallery director, this time from Munich, Walter Storms. These are just a couple of examples, but



already at this stage it is right to point out that these findings were made possible by the interests of both sides. Polish curators and artists sought contacts with rest of Europe in order to exhibit and gain attention of commercial galleries, and this promised financial independence at home and independence of promotion. While the benefits of Western curators may be also described on two levels.

Countries like Poland and the Czech-Republic and Slovakia, were offering new commercial possibilities. In the majority of cases eastern artists were not represented by galleries in the commercial sense, and pricing of the works were very low. Apart from that, "unknown" eastern Europe was offering new artistic ideas and different type of aesthetic.(27) In the cases of Walter Storms, director of Walter Storms Gallery, and Peter Leo, director of Museum of Modern Art in Bochum, their initiative was to find new artists. The Storms Gallery managed to present best examples of Polish "op art" by Ryszard Winiarski, Polish constructivism by Wladyslaw Starzewski and avant-garde painting by Roman Opalka. Peter Leo, as director of the Museum in Bochum developed long term contacts with Polish and Eastern European art world which helped him to present an exhibition called "Profiles", showing the latest and most adventurous artistic ideas. Contacts with Poland were fruitful in establishing a collection of 35 works in the Museum during the years 1972-1992.(28)

This type of activity fought against all the prejudices and against the suspicions of innovative artistic achievements

in Poland. Since 1970 there has been co-operation with the director at the ICA in London, mainly because of the participation of Bill McAllister. After his resignation, unfortunately, contacts has been less frequent. Due to a particular interest in Eastern European art, the Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh had for many years been presenting Polish contemporary art and theatre though, the main gallery closed in 1992. The same can be said about Nicolas Serota (today director of the Tate gallery), Rudi Fuchs, director of the Museum of Modern Art in Amsterdam, and the independent curator and organizer of big international projects, Pontus Hulten from Sweden.

In other words the threads of co-operation have been established in many areas, although it was largely due to the individual contacts. Apart from this, the contacts have not been encouraged and supported in any ways by local or higher authorities. Direct financial support for the independent galleries did not exist. Other galleries were supported indirectly as they were part of an institution such as a University or Fine Art Academy. It is possible to say looking back at this almost heroic struggle to sustain identity in the avant-garde artistic circles in Poland, that those independent small galleries succeeded. They succeeded in protecting a micro-space for individual experiments and artistic confrontation. The biggest achievement was the ability to sustain artistic development, which resulted in vital contacts and academic discussions on the shape of contemporary art. Due to these contacts and experience in art promotion under

special circumstances, the next generation has a background to continue the work. This background is specially important, because current situation also demands global thinking.

Part B - "Modern times"- new era in contemporary art promotion in Poland post 1989, examining the ground for international co-operation.

A different reality, now dictates life and shapes it in the galleries in Warsaw or Poznan. "The existential threat has been replaced by the problems of the financial nature".(29) Therefore further examination of the situation will be devoted to the artistic problems as well as the managerial difficulties, of the galleries operating in Poland at present. Different dimensions of gallery management are noticeable at the very beginning of the 1990's when the first steps towards the commercial market have been taken in the country through the special plan (named by the Minister of Economy - Leszek Balcerowicz, The Balcerowicz plan) and through the newly introduced regulations of laws and taxes within the economic structures.

"The Heroic years are over," said Magdalena Tarabula, director of the Zderzak Gallery in Cracow. First signs of normalisation came with the possibility of producing far-reaching publicity, free art promotion and the giving of rights to private and alternative galleries. This time problems of a financial nature have become a dire source of affliction to galleries.(30) Gallery Foksal at the end of 1992-1993 faced closure due to the high rent, but thanks to the petitions of friends of this famous exhibition space (from Poland, France and, Germany) it has been saved.(31) Many galleries of lesser importance have not managed to survive. Despite this, the gallery landscape has maintained and developed many levels of interest ranging from galleries,

such as the Zacheta, dependent on the Ministry of Culture and Art with a coherent programme approved by the Ministry, to the gallery of the Union of the Artists - ZPAP na Mazowieckiej - and the galleries of the Office of the Artistic Exhibitions (BWA), or private galleries like the Stawski in Cracow, and Anna Karenska in Poznan. The Gallery Zderzak continues a healthy tradition of art promotion based on programmes built over years. Other centres are also open towards international cooperation supporting the best traditions of Polish contemporary art and showing it as part of the European dimension. Noteworthy in this respect is the exhibition of Polish contemporary art, "Polen, Kunst, Zeit"(1990), supported by the Adenauer Foundation from Germany with cooperation with the "Appendix Gallery" and the former director of the Museum of Art in Lodz. A Polish dimension was also present at the Chicago International Art Expo'92, cooperating with the Lakeside Group from Chicago.

A newly created centre for Contemporary Art, the State Gallery Sopot (under the directorship of Ryszard Ziarkiewicz) started dynamic activities in collecting, and exhibiting art works within the post-conceptual and progressive mode. The most notable exhibition which has taken place recently is : "Perserweracja mistyczna i roza" (1993), which gathered together the youngest Polish artists and introduced German artists as well. There are many interests and types of art supported by the galleries, but the existence of these centres depends, of course, on the managerial and curatorial skills of the people working there.

The position of the curator as a creative viewer and a professional art manager has been increasingly exposed to different kind of pressures. Lack of financial back-up in this sector is very pronounced, and the network of formal and informal institutions supporting art promotion and culture in general is not yet well developed. There are some new institutions with independent sources of money, and these are helping to secure promotional development. Notable in this respect is the Centre for Contemporary Art supported by the Open Society Foundation of George Soros, and the Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw (Zamek Ujazdowski) and the Centre for Polish Sculpture in Oronsco, which both support experimental artists. Changes are visible, but financial barriers and an undeveloped art market slow down the promotional process. The situation also changed within the internal structure of the Polish art world itself. The change is defined by Hans Gunter Golinski: "The imposed isolation of the country (previously created) an intimacy of the artist, critics and the public which can be really envied".(32)

It is not possible to say this looking at the art world in Poland today. What has happened under the new conditions can best be described as a kind of dispersal, where the free market has had more influence in forming of the gallery interior. Many galleries, in order to improve their financial situation, tend to introduce selling points which deform the character of the exhibition space. Adding to the problem, many paintings are bought directly from the artists rather than from the galleries.

What is really needed to build, support and protect the overall standard of culture is for the visual arts to find devoted curators who will give special attention to art of high standard. What is also needed is for promoters and those who have access to funds to take risk and support young artists, giving them opportunity to present their ideas on an international level.(33)

If we think about immediate improvements, additional publicity is going to be definite necessity. The first years of decentralisation resulted in a lack of sufficient information about promotional activities relating to the visual arts. The in-house publication of the Centre for Contemporary Art (Zamek Ujazdowski) called "Obieg", and the Polish edition of "Flash Art" are usually available at the distributing points, but only after the expected date of the next issue. Clearly, the co-ordination and the organization lacks firm frameworks. The financial situation does not help but there must be an understanding of better timing of publicity. Information must be provided in advance or simultaneously with the event, not a month later. This problem is especially dangerous for the young generation of the artists who yet have not been working with any commercial or independent galleries. New art demands publicity and discussion which would help to define its style and form the vision of the 1990's. There are far fewer galleries of non-commercial status, and at the same time there are bigger promotional (consequently commercial) expectations in the gallery work. Artists are more independent as individuals,

particularly those who attract foreign curators.

Here it would be appropriate to concentrate on the changes and emerging stylistics of the artists working in post-1989 era. This time, as well as in the mid 1980's, Polish artists have managed to come up with the artistic statements which show their major contribution to the contemporary art development in Europe and the world.

In spite of the existential preoccupations, the search for a valid definition of the individual, and right definition of the relations between artist and the modern times seems to be the priority.

The post-1989 era has brought interesting stylistic changes amongst those artists who started their careers after 1983. The new turn has been marked by far-reaching consequences arising from the abandoning of figuration. The changing of the rhetoric of the sign, and the changing of the artistic preferences from figurative towards the abstract (on the one hand) and from the form of painterly articulation towards three-dimensional objects (on the other) prepare the ground for new artistic perceptions.

It is worth mentioning here that a preference for one style does not completely exhaust and silence the abandoned stylistic motifs. These can come back to life along with the artistic philosophy which they mirror. Renewal of the formal visual language from the figurative towards the category of the "empty sign" has meant the up-dating of the structural and conceptual interests begun in 1960-1970 by circles of the post-avantgarde.



"Polish artists are exhausted with political questions. They have gone back into art", as Anda Rottenberg puts it. Going back into art coincides with the important political changes, comparable to the regaining of sovereignty in the international area.(34) This external condition provides at the same time quantity of "psychological space" which can be used by the artist without ballasts of obligation or "nihilistic anarchy and national martyrdom". In the 1990's the normalisation of everyday life provides a return to the search for conceptual features, but, in fact there are also discussions in terms of the object of art itself, where the biggest space is given over the artist. This is because the artist is still able to concentrate on himself/herself and to search for new forms from the view point of "credibility of himself towards himself".(35)

The influence of the physical territory will appear only through the transformation of the philosophy of the object, because the experience of the international media obliterates local or regional ties through the universal and the international visual language of the contemporary art.

A philosophy, which today inspires and, at the same time, is being questioned as a source of new ideas is that of Strzeminski (the idea of the unistic picture) and the structure of universal time in art. This philosophy specially popular and known among German artists like Gunther Uecker, constantly provides a platform for meetings, group exhibitions and discussions on new discoveries. Another source of discussion lies in the constructivist tradition transformed in

the 1960's in the light of the philosophy of reduction and early proto-conceptual motifs of thinking in the works of Roman Opalka and Ryszard Winiarski.

This time the empty sign "has become the sign of an extensive revision of theoretical and pragmatic foundation" and also opens up the possibility of constructing contemporary art with a strong notion of avant-garde artifact structure where "dualities based on the ontic (...) structural and semantic composition allow unique inner theory making, which is parallel to artistic discussion".(36)

In this case the great potential of creativity becomes the major way of relating people and giving them reason for cooperation. One of the most recent and most spectacular artist whose work has been a source of foreign interest is Mirosław Balka. Amongst all these philosophical motifs there is a challenge which is visible in his sculptures orientated towards the "wide-post Beuys tradition."(Plate 3.)

In works of Balka specific poetry and a philosophy of the materials offers a description of the individual world. A subtle dialogue takes place in the objects where steel and salt or tinted wood, iron and sponge with salty water co-exist as components in the construction. Dialogue in some cases changes into a whisper which does not need to accommodate space. Therefore the object seems to diminish and inner relations have more weight than interaction with the outerworld. The primarily inner dialogue is also enriched by the interference of the human presence. An awareness of this presence serves to make the object more approachable. This

happened with the objects presented in the Polish Pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale in the exhibition 37.1 Since then and even before Balka's works attracted many galleries, like Marc Jancou from Zurich, Karl Nordenhake from Sweden. In this case ties between the Polish gallery, the Foksal in Warsaw, representing Balka and the foreign galleries, has been formed because of the artist's contacts.

The Foksal Gallery first showed his piece entitled 367 x 224 x 255, where artist introduced pieces of soap in the work. The Foksal Gallery also supported the artist with an adequate account of his works. As A. Przywara wrote Balka's works saved remains of history, by bring back the private and individual dimension in dealing with time and space", a dialogue with materials works as a kind of liaison with reality.(37)

Providing expertise and guidance are very important especially in case of young and inexperienced artists. Sometimes a professional comment or criticism may help an artist to embark on a serious career. In the case of Wlodzimierz Pawlak, a former member of Gruppa, the guidance of dynamic curator, Anda Rottenberg, helped later on to find representatives in Vienna to promote and exhibit his art in Germany. His artistic experiments with a painterly language, and his return to a reduction of narrative and dynamic features, became of great interest in the West.

Multilayered white pictures open up monotonous lines of black dashes. These works are, in fact called "The Diary". The artist aims to discuss a mode of timelessness where the

picture lasts within itself. Layers of white paint and rhythms of black dashes in case of "The Diary", or the three-dimensional inscription from the unreadable alphabet of Strzeminski in the picture of the same title, also introduce experiences of the proto-picture. The most interesting element is some kind of pre-historic starting point, where time itself is at its beginning, leaving open all possibilities of creation and fulfilment in the picture from the start. A different perspective is introduced by reference to the visual language of Malevich. (Plate 4, 5.) The doctrine of "reaching the summit of true feeling" has been given a new dimension. (38) Idea becomes question rather than answer, and is directed towards a new construction of the visual field. By the use of suprematist language in one picture Pawlak shows a whole spectrum of images from the cubo-futuristic period of Russian painting. The creation of "horror vacui" the mixing and density of images and symbols leads to the neutralisation of the original meaning of the individual images. "Empty sign becomes the feature of the individual time, time in the dispersal of which exists the possibility of artistic dialogue between the artist and the object." Pawlak's discoveries have led to the support of the Museum of Art in Lodz, the Foksal Gallery and later on brought him a representative in Vienna the Peter Pakesh Gallery. (Plate 6.)

The start of the careers of Balka and Pawlak are good examples of how curators and galleries in Poland have actively supported the artists. It will be worth mentioning that these are the artists whose current style has also made a strong

input on the artistic circles abroad with which Polish curators were in touch. Cooperation became easier and additionally strengthened developing contacts.

There are unfortunately examples where there is not enough interest on the Polish side, and artists can only get recognition because of foreign curators. It was thanks to Helena Kontova, curator of the Venice Biennale "Aperto" in June 1993, that the works of Zbigniew Libera were seen in a major international presentation. Libera's different artistic and philosophical approach impressed Italian art critic Achille Bonito Oliva.(39) Art objects are based on spiral and sinusoidal constructions from plexiglass and aluminium. The function of these structures is to work through rhythmic energising of shape to produce a transformation. The audiovisual part of work (supported by the clinically clean construction of the tubes) announces the inseparable dependency of these elements (eg. "The Bather" 1991). (Plate 7.) "The Bather" involves a cyclic elapse of the sound of dripping water vanishing into empty plexiglass tubes. It is a metaphor for the deceased human being (described by workers in funeral parlours as - *le baigneur* - the bather). The human association comes through the water's sound being freed by the construction. Its specific music and the shiny clearness of the object evokes the hospital interior, where the sound of the life-support machines echoes the heart. The drama of the situation has been frozen, emotions put aside. The structure of the objects serves as both producer and container of a power, which, in case of "The Segment of the signal", (1993)

aims to describe the thin red line between life and death by objects which evoke "life" more than the human presence itself.(Plate 8.) The deep metaphors and sophisticated language of Libera open a very original field where, in silence fractured by sound, the artist starts questioning the "independence of the human system". These works belong to the new vision and newly explored areas in Polish contemporary art, and already now they require more publicity and more attention from the curators. Another example of an artist who emerged as an important new representative of contemporary thought, but who has been left without adequate attention is Pawel Althamer. His major exhibition has been organized in the Museum of Modern Art in Bochum in cooperation with the young curator at the National Museum in Warsaw, Dorota Monkiewicz.

Althamer's works will be always remembered for his experimenting with the perspective of the viewing of the work of art. One of his works called "Lodz" (Boat), which presents a large iron a human-size object, began this special tendency. The artist closed himself within the object and by lying in it, was surrounded and restructured spatially by the work of art he had himself created.(Plate 9.) The art work experiments with the viewing perspective, by offering the individual inner and outer viewing of the object. Further development of that idea has been shown in work called "Dark Chamber" in 1993. The inner spiritual space has become a field of exploration. The installation helps to find recognition and peace within himself for the artist/viewer, where total darkness works as intergal part of the work of art.

All these examples serve as underlying means of diagnosing the state of the post-conceptual art in Poland, and also as symptoms of that relation between society and artist where the distance grows even wider, due to the problems and preoccupations of today's world. At the same time we may observe the growing independence of the artist in relation to the representing gallery, with the simultaneously paradoxical situation of a great need for artistic centres to promote art dynamically.

Artistic power lies, in breaking in to new artistic fields. Those young artists, major achievement may be described as lying in their contribution to universal culture and to a set of values based on continuation and innovation within the post-Duchamp and post-Beuys tradition of media. The implications and development of this visual language and parallel problematic may be very significant for the ability to make judgements concerning the condition of culture and human being, so much awaited in public contemporary art.

The second achievement can be seen in a sustained ( although transformed) bond which can be loosely described as with the territory of origin on philosophical and aesthetic levels.

Unlike the best known Russian artists, the young generation of the Polish artists decided to continue living in their own country, and unlike young Czech artists, they have already proved their ability to attract foreign curators and dealers. That is why well-coordinated promotion of contemporary art should expand. The need is great for the growth of the supportive structures, like publications and information, as



well as more exhibiting spaces run by open-minded gallery managers ready to accommodate the new artistic visions of the 1990's.

Very big changes in thinking about art promotion and in running international galleries are still taking place. The stylistics and the rhetoric of the new art are the sources of much discussion today, especially when the artistic scene is occupied by the established artists, who made their debuts after Martial Law, and the young artists desperately need to exercise their ideas in new galleries.

There is no doubt that public interest in contemporary art in Poland is not sufficient. There is also no doubt that what has already been emerging will have a strong impact on continuing artistic creation into the 1990's and beyond.

Therefore even if the working conditions in the art sector are changing, and, inspite of changes, the conditions are still hard, there is a very strong need to continue and develop in a modern way contemporary art promotion in Poland. What will be important is the ability to adapt to new economic circumstances and also to draw as much as possible from the contacts and experiences of the previous international cooperation on the informal level. These contacts have made already the initial foreground for cultural, economical cooperation on a small scale, and if widened they may play significant role in strengthening the ties with rest of Europe. An activated art market and active artistic and media circles should secure successful, modern art promotion.

With respect to the incredible initiative and dynamic



commitment of the independent art curators of the 1970's and 1980's there is a belief that the 1990's signal an era in which the normal existence for the gallery in Polish society will be possible.

There is a hope that needed improvements will work soon, that is why it is so important to know all the weakest and strongest points in art promotion in Poland.

Notes:

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2. Dr Grzegorz Dziamski, 'Niezależne galerie autorskie w Polsce lat siedemdziesiątych' in: Rynek sztuki współczesnej, Ośrodek badania rynku sztuki współczesnej w Poznaniu, Poznań 1988, pp 13-25.
3. Interview with Robin Klassnik, director of the Matt's Gallery, November 1993.
4. Ryszard Kluszczyński, 'Kino w diaspory' in : Oko i Ucho Problemy sztuk wizualnych i słuchowych, Łódź 1989, pp 8.
5. Grzegorz Dziamski, 'Niezależne galerie autorskie, w Polsce lat siedemdziesiątych' in: Rynek sztuki współczesnej, Poznań 1988, p13.
6. Interview with Robin Klassnik, Director of the Matt's Gallery, London November 1993.
7. Galeria Foksal 1966-1988, Biblioteka Galerii Foksal SBWA publication, 1989.
8. *ibid.* 6
9. Ryszard Stanisławski, 'Z muzealnej praktyki odpowiedź na postawione pytania' in: Kolekcja sztuki 20 wieku, Warszawa 1991, pp 37.
10. Interview with Walter Storms, director of the Walter Storms Gallery, Munich August 1992.
11. Archives of contemporary thought, Łódź.
12. Statement of Kazuo Katase, one of the participating artists in the exhibition "Construction in process".
13. Galerie lat osiemdziesiątych ( Galleries of the 1980's) Zachęta Gallery, Warsaw 1990.
14. Interview with Włodzimierz Pawlak, Korytów, December 1992.
15. Galerie lat osiemdziesiątych ( Galleries of the 1980's) Zachęta Gallery, Warsaw 1990.
16. Tadeusz Boruta transcribed in: Art & Business 3/4, 1993, pp 65.
17. Interview with Joanna Kiliszek, Hamburg, December 1993. ( Joanna Kiliszek works in Cologne and Warsaw ).

18. *ibid.* 16.
19. Ryszard Grzyb, Oi dobrze juz nr 1, (How good yet no 1) Warsaw 1984.
20. Piotr Krakowski, 'Dwurnik's life -long war', Zderzak Gallery Cracow: Art & Business, No 7/8, 1992, pp 34.
21. Gruppa 1982-1992, Catalogue, Gallery Zacheta, Warsaw, 1992 pp 58.
22. *Ibid.* 21.
23. Anda Rottenberg, 'Introduction', Gruppa 1982-1992, Galeria Zacheta, Warsaw, 1992, pp 58.
24. *ibid.* 21.
25. Interview with Wlodzimierz Pawlak, Korytow, September 1993.
26. *ibid* 21.
27. Interview with Robin Klassnik, Matt's Gallery, London, November 1993.
28. Unvollkommen Kunst als Reflexion des Nicht-konnes, Unvollkommen die Aktuelle Kunstszena in Polen, Museum Bochum, 1993.
29. Interview with Henry Meyric Hughes, Director of Exhibitions, Hayward Gallery, London, May 1993.
30. Galerie lat osiemdziesiatych ( Galleries of the 1980's), Zacheta Gallery, Warsaw, 1990.
31. One of the art critics Hanna Ptaszkowska herself travelled specially to France and Germany to collect the signs under the petition.
32. *ibid.* 28
33. Interview with young Polish artists, Zbigniew Libera and Mariola Przyjemka, Warsaw, September 1993.
34. Kim Levin, 'Warsaw, Poland' in : Sculpture, March/April 1993.
35. Maria Morzuch, 'Trwanie' ( Continuity), Oko i ucho. ( Eye and ear magazine), Lodz 1989, pp 36.

36. *ibid.*3.
37. Andrzej Przywara, 'Puste miejsce' ( 'Empty space'), Mirosław Balka, April/ My body cannot do everything I ask for, Gallery Foksal, Warsaw 1991.
38. *ibid.*21.
39. Interview with Zbigniew Libera, Venice Biennale, June 1993.

## CHAPTER 2.

### "Situation Prague" - awakenings and new growing possibilities in contemporary art cooperation: new Gallery routes.

Arriving in Prague, as distinct from any other former Eastern-Block city, one can quickly realise the enormous influence of the geographical conditions on the development of the urban structure. Prague is so close to Salzburg (in Austria), Munich (in Bavaria) and relatively close to Italy and Hungary not to mention Southern Poland that it is easy to assess the cultural potential of that city with the major traffic of the artists, writers, tourists and students. In spite of 45 years of Czech separation, historically-built cultural ties did not disappear even after half a century, and today, more than at any other times this can be visible as important factor in the strengthening of the city and the country itself.

As a strong European centre before the war, it now also reaches for the harmonious development which would attract many foreigners and would allow its citizens to benefit from its stability and prosperity. There is no question here of the importance of Prague within Europe. There are questions regarding further development and improvement of the infrastructures and communications, especially those facilitating the cultural life of the city on commercial and non-commercial level. The situation within the sector of the visual arts, are of main interest.

As an important undercurrent there has been a political issue concerning the membership of the EC. In the case of Prague, there is no need to prove its European roots, but

rather to underline its continued importance for Europe itself. The particular place of this country explains why it is necessary to make a strong distinction between the needs of each former Eastern European country.

False generalizations about the problems in former Eastern European Block seem to be one of the major obstacles towards effective international co-operation. This issue is of special consequence for my study. This chapter specifically concentrates on the Czech Republic, making references to the considerable differences with the Polish situation.

Through this discussion I hope that more information on the true picture of the possibilities in the Czech Republic within the contemporary art will be apparent.

My work aims to show the most developed and prominent centres for contemporary art, and their struggles with the undeveloped structures and economic problems in the country. A diagnosis of the situation in contemporary art promotion in the Czech Republic will be assessed in relation to the present activities, whereas my research on the Polish art promotion structures paid more attention to the historic background and experience. Due to the severe political regime Czech artists were more restricted and the exhibiting spaces more controlled than in Poland. Therefore the post-war era enjoyed only a small measure of relative freedom only till mid of 1960's.(1) At the start of the 1960's many galleries began orientating themselves towards creating new, favourable conditions in the art scene for young artists. This had become possible after the Czechoslovak Communist Party dropped its

dogmatic insistence of Socialist Realism at the end of the 1950s, as stated by Jiri Kohoutek, former director of the Mid Bohemian Gallery.

It was also the time when majority of regional galleries were established and the tradition of the Czech modern art which had been banished underground began to break in the open once more. The young generation of the artists had at last more opportunities for interesting exchanges and confrontations with stimulating world examples. This period was the peculiarly important time as says Jan Sekara, from his professional experience as art historian and curator.

According to him "the art of the sixties in terms of spiritual context and expression influenced the art of 1970's and protected avant-garde art of the 1970/80 from the implications of over 20 years of inertia (which condemned certain artists and galleries)". Obviously the suppression of the official cultural life did not prevent artists from being creative and experimenting with the new artistic ideas. But once more it will be worth mentioning that in many cases "later works are related back to the problems of the 1960's as a crucial supplement to the personal programme of artists like Adriana Simotova, Jitka and Kveta Valova".(2) Virtually all contacts with the international scene were cut off, and for a variety of the reasons fluxus style, conceptual style and entire stream of performance was "not in the gallery's interest". Rarely, some artists were allowed to attend the opening of an exhibition of their work abroad, but if so there was also a security agent sent by the State, as happened during the

opening of the show in Munich in Walter Storms Gallery in 1978. The Munich gallery still today keeps in their archives photographs of the "gentlemen wearing plastic ties" invigilating the private view.

From early 1970's some more entrepreneurial owners of the galleries dared to try to take out of the country contemporary art and present it abroad, mainly in Germany and France.(3)

Those contacts had special weight as the only means of cultural exchanges and the only means of promotion of the contemporary art work from Czechoslovakia. It is thanks to these people that works of Vaclav Bostik, Stanislav Kolibal and Adriana Simotova became known and accepted in Germany among the galleries and collectors (like Gerhardt Lenz from Schonberg Castle).(Plate 10.) The artist's contacts brought even more interest into the country.(4) Therefore international interest and the grounds for the co-operation has been established quite quickly after 1989 and the inevitable centre was Prague. A little later Brno also emerged as important place for the contemporary art exhibitions.

Taking a closer look into recent developments in Prague and Brno, and observing the power of major investors in the cultural section, it is fair to say that although Czech Republic during 1970/80 remained behind Poland, today the country has a great chance to establish leading position as a cultural centre.

Before going into detail, I would like to point out few interesting signals and events. The first is the financial help for the rescuing of Prague architecture by the Prince



Charles Fund. The second is the establishing of the Central European University in Prague, fully funded by the Soros Foundation. The moving of the entire archive of the "Free Europe Radio" from Munich is also funded by the Soros Foundation. The indication of the significant interest in Prague within the tourist and cultural arena, is the publication of the "Time Out" magazine presentation of five chosen capital cities: Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, and Vienna & Prague, introducing their galleries and major cultural events. From such signs there is no doubt that Prague is not going to be left out when considering the most exciting sights and places for art and culture in Europe. The overall interest in the City as the place for European heritage, its beauty and inspiration brings hopes for dynamic traffic of exchanges and cooperation. There are definitely important assets which have been recognized by the Czechs themselves, but reality within the country is far more complicated. The time has come to build a reliable infrastructure, so there is no need to count on the swings of fashion to bring it into focus as a European city or to draw attention to the country itself. Places ready to take up an initiative and handle the financial burden of running an exhibiting space are only found in Prague and Brno. There are practically no support schemes for cultural institutions, including commercial and non-commercial galleries. What is left is to apply for the few grants available.

All of galleries face similar problems and require flexible management. Starting a gallery under these

circumstances is very difficult without previous experience and without previous leads and contacts, like those created few years ago by MXM or Behemot. But at the same time, the post-1989 reality has something very important to offer. New freedom of initiative and opportunities to travel have, in, the case of the Czech Republic, been most valuable. Ties with Austria and Germany play a special role, as the director of the Behemot Gallery, Mr Babicek has said. Commercial galleries in the majority of cases survive because of the Art Fairs in Germany (mainly Frankfurt, Koln, Bremen) as is in the case of the gallery, Via Art, and the MXM and Behemot galleries.(5)

It will be important to remark that in Poland Art Fairs are less recognized as potential source of income for the gallery because of the general costs and costs of transport due to further distances from Gdansk or Warsaw to Vienna or Frankfurt. Nevertheless, for Polish galleries as well as for the Czech galleries, international group exhibitions or types of "monographic" presentations in Western galleries are (apart from purely commercial ventures), a very significant means of co-operation.

Lately specially interesting initiatives have arisen in which southern and central Austrian cultural departments have created new cultural ties with the Fine Arts Academy in Prague. The best example is the exhibition in Galerie 5020 in Salzburg (5.8-11.9 1993) which showed the most interesting young artists from Prague in a presentation called "Post Security".(Plate 11, 12.) Thanks to the regional project "Kulturkontakt" in Salzburg, and curatorial help of the senior

artists today, Professors at the Prague Fine Arts Academy such as Milan Knizak and Stanislav Kolibal, and the artistic ideas of Milena Dopitova, Petr Pisarik and Petr Lysacek, this exhibition has been the most significant for the young artistic scene in Prague. The programme of the "Kulturkontakt" brought most of the up-to date young artists, bridging the gap of our knowledge of recent developments in post-conceptual Czech art.(6)

Another important factor which made this exhibition possible was the growing strength of the Czech exhibiting spaces which were for the first time capable of gathering and promoting artists effectively. The majority of the artists in the "Post Security" exhibition have been looked after by the MXM Gallery. Previously, projects like "Trigon 1991", providing a workshop and exhibition for Czech, Slovak, German and Italian artists, was fully co-ordinated and researched by the leading Czech art-critics, Jana and Jiri Sevcik, who for a long time have been working on the animation of the international exchanges concerning contemporary art in the country. This is manifested by their help and curatorial assistance in showing the most controversial Czech contemporary art group, "Tvardohlavi" (a formation which does not exist any more, and whose artists work separately today) was possible already in 1990 in the exhibition, "Young Czech art in Munich", also shown in Brittany in France and in Denmark. It is true that it was only in 1990 that the first private art gallery, MXM, had been established by Thomas Prochazka in Prague in order to contribute to the

marketability of the Czech art. It followed by the Behemot Gallery. However only in the past two years have these centres been able to take responsibility for the shaping of artistic scene in Prague.(7)

Growing recognition of those galleries can be also measured by their abilities in attracting formal funding and private sponsorship. Catalogues in 1992 and 1993 of the MXM gallery have been funded by the Soros Foundation and by the Czech origin industrial company in Cologne, Jírotka Kunstgeisserei, while the Behemot Gallery managed to attract funding from the Prague Trade Centre (part of the company DSD Amsterdam). Gallery Via Art offered advertising space for the newly-established estate agents in Prague, the Commercial Bank and for the Munich Art Agency.(8)

From the beginning, managing directors of the Prague galleries have tried to draw from the resources available and future opportunities for funding. It is interesting to observe how close the co-operation between the gallery and foreign investment can come due to mutual aims. This not only depends on an awareness that "trade and business also requires art" as was written by B.B.Lagers, director of the Trade Centre in Prague, but also the idea of Europe-wide common space, where funding for the eastern European art may come from the Western industrial investors.(9) Again the regional ties are source of strength. Therefore it is no surprise that in Prague the major support comes from Austria and Germany. To balance the picture of the "arts aid" idea, it is important to stress the awareness of Czech businesses for the need to support national

cultural centres. For the first time there has been a growing understanding of the need to protect the collecting of the avant-garde art among the official state institutions, like that established in 1991 with the Czech Visual Art Foundation, "Muzaion". This organization, with the co-operation with Ceska Galerie and Collection of the Gallery of Benedikt Rejt has helped to realise an exhibition in the former monastery in Strachov, showing in September 1993 the best Czech minimalists from the post avant-garde formation, like Vaclav Bostik, Cestmir Kafka, Stanislav Kolibal, Karel Malich, Adriena Simotova.(10) The exhibition officially underlined the value of this art as part of the Czech heritage. The occasion was especially moving since every one who has contributed to the publicity and theoretical discussions in this type of art finally achieved proper recognition. The exhibition coincided with the advertising of the contemporary art collection of the Gallery of Benedict Rejit in Louny (near Prague) established in 1965. Its 25-year, "off centre existence" allowed it to collect art works from the most productive times in the post war Czech Republic.

This collection is practically the only devoted completely to the contemporary art starting with avant-garde, and the works of Styrsky, Sima, and Toyen. Its uniqueness brought all the enthusiasts together to launch a campaign in order to get funding for the restoration of the building and to secure development of the collection. Apart from the Muzaion Foundation, interest in the project has been shown by the Commercial Bank in Prague and Czech National Investment.

In spite of economic difficulties, the will to provide for publications and for the transport of art, by the commercial institutions is bigger in the Czech Republic than it is in Poland. The commercial potential of the galleries established in Prague at the beginning of the 1990's is very hard to predict yet, they are the first to create a proper base for independent galleries, which can dictate prices in the art market. What is very promising is that these new galleries contribute to the marketability of the works of young generation which emerged during 1980's. Galleries like MXM seem to do this with an impressive awareness of the difficulties for an aesthetically different art.

There is no need to underline again the economic problems. No less important are the complicated situations of the young artists whose earlier works had been divorced from the original context of the pre-1989 background. The majority of works lost the context "in which until now could, they fully express themselves and present all their values", as Mr Prochazka wrote in 1991, fully understanding that the "new era" will acquire completely reconstructed artistic approach and that it will demand completely different questions on the style of life.(11)

At the same time, the escalation of the internal problems of artistic values and new stylistics have been enhanced by the position of the young Czech artists still outside the mainstream. In many cases, paradoxically, this state has been due to their own "stubborn posing the question of identity", and the difficulty in establishing their own place in the new

situation.(12) Very difficult for many artists also was the commercialisation of the art. So far the status of the art has been measured by its significant role as the independent and unofficial intellectual domain. Those values have been converted into money, which dramatically changed the status of the art.(13) Problems mounted up in those few years but they are likely to be solved. From now on the gallery became responsible for "providing the art with new contexts and systems of reference (...) and to help artists to adapt so they will not have no longer play the role of dissidents".(14)

The gallery will provide information and help to establish the artists in the country and promote them abroad.

From the commercial point of view, Czech galleries have to bear in mind that "sometimes" Czech contemporary art can be difficult to understand for the Western public. This is why the role of the gallery and its publishing schemes are even particularly precious. This problem concerning the "communication of the work of art" has been taken on board by the Behemot Gallery, stressing in its policy presentation the facilitating of the direct contact with the work of art as "the moment of the realization".(15) Great importance has been accorded to relations with the art press, specifically with "Vytvarne Umeni"(the bi-monthly magazine for modern and contemporary art in Czech and English), and "Atelier"(the bi-weekly journal of contemporary art). These two publications gather the best art critics, like Josef Hlavacek, Ludvik Hlavacek, and they take on board the artists point of view.



Others like David Cerny, Jiri Kovanda, as members of the advisory board of the "Vytvarne Umeni", and try to cooperate with such foreign art critics as David Cohen, Jeffrey Deitch, Helena Kontova.

Obviously, then, the publication becomes the discussion platform and a means of making interesting contacts and furthering co-operation. The prominent role of "Vytvarne Umeni" as the most serious contemporary art magazine has been recognized by the Ministry of the Cultural Affairs, which provides continuing support for its development of the publication. This marks very important progress, because for many years, especially during 1970's and 1980's, for many Czech and Russian artists the Polish art magazine "Projekt" had been the only source of information in theory and practice of contemporary art.(16)

Today, the situation is different and the background and literary support for Czech contemporary art is growing currently. Some galleries like MXM tend to have art critics permanently "on board", writing on current affairs, and they try to promote their artists through the kind help of curators and writers who fled the Czech Republic, like Helena Kontova (editor of the Flash Art and director of the Trevi Flash Art Museum). Already known are the exhibitions organized by curators of Czech origin, like Noemi Smolikova and Zdenek Felix, working with the older generation of Czech artists. Possibilities are open. The galleries are prepared to show equal interest in variety of styles in order to give full picture of the influences and differences between the



generations of the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's in shaping the contemporary art stage in the Czech Republic.

Nevertheless soon each of the galleries will have to work out more coherent programme which would help to define the profile of the gallery more precisely, as unfortunately none of them have done so yet. The loosely described programmes of the galleries will soon require boundaries in order to stand out in the international confrontations.(17) Better defined policies would also help many more exhibited artists, giving them more credibility through reliable, well-researched contacts within the circles of the artists working in similar way.

The only good side of that situation (lack of concentration on particular style) is that maybe under those circumstances it is easier for the galleries spontaneously to participate in many projects and host a greater number of experimenting artists. Very good example is the exhibition called "Archetypy"/ "Archetypes" organized by the independent curator Vlasta Cihakova-Noshiro in Manes (Prague) in September 1993. The project gathered artists from the US (Bill Viola) from Germany (Magdalena Jetelova), from Japan (Toshikatsu Endo) and some Czech artists who emerged in the 1980's and were currently working with Behemot Gallery. The programme of the Behemot Gallery is not predefined. Therefore the exhibition organized by Vlasta Cihakova-Noshiro was allowed to widen the artistic spectrum by inviting the Japanese artist. The exhibition managed to examine "conditions of entirely different social environments", by having representatives from

different parts of the world. Nature and Culture, this very complex theme, has been discussed by installations, which draw from the power of the "primordial pictorial ideas" equally rooted in our culture and biological environment.(18)

It is possible to state that due to the natural development process among the younger generations of artists and because of the flexibility of the galleries profiles, the dominant artistic aim has not yet been fully defined. The search and the experiment are dominant factors in the works of Vladimir Merta, Ivan Kafka, and Ales Vesely.

The ideas and routes taken by the artists vary strongly. Apart from of the post-conceptual stylistic explored by the young artists, the stream of young realistic painters seems to become more and more active among the Fine Arts Academies recent graduates. This group, looking for the independent contact with broader public life, defined it's artistic credo in the "Motorway manifesto" written by Blanka Valcharova, Pavel Holy, and Mirek Vojacek. A significant statement is that "a work and its creator proceed from a strictly and photographically realist depiction of reality, together with the contemporary search for new relations for painting". This attitude seems to be built on the theories of the Italian Arte Cifra, German Neue Wilde, Polish Gruppa and Scottish Glasgow Pups, regarding the return to traditional media. Although, the voice of the Czech artists in this artistic matter comes nearly a decade later than developments abroad, it does contribute important aspects of its own, like an acceptance of the ready-made object as "solving all the problems of an

ideological content".(19) Czech theory accommodates not only traditional media, but also artistic styles with a core of realism, like pop-art and of course hyperrealism.

This diversion and separation from post-avantgarde, abstract art can be also seen as a statement of the young generation trying to separate itself from the famous and influential style of the 1960's in the Czech Republic and to counterbalance the strong artistic character of such works as those by Stanislav Kolibal or Vaclav Bostik. The young generation, like former members of the Pondeli (Monday) or the Tvardohlavi (Hard headed), were already criticised for being too thoughtless when playing with national symbols and destroying a sense of identity and internal integrity. In a revolutionary manner, it is possible to say that in order to build something must be taken down. The young generation of artists entered completely unprepared ground for their ideas and they must from the start be seen as "heretics" concerning tradition.

The Czech tradition can be described as present in the works of the older generation, which works mainly in abstraction and concentrates on the question of the language of art itself in line with 1960/1970 esthetics, as Mr Sevcik says. "The middle generation had found its source in the tradition of satire, in order to offer resistance towards the absurdity of their situation. A number of younger painters continues the grotesque cynicism of their elders but usually avoid expressing the existential attitudes".(20) It is hard to define the way the 1990's art has chosen. It is still too

early for that.(21)

A sense of search and disillusion can be more effectively highlighted by the recent project carried out by Jiri and Jana Sevcik along with the artist Vladimir Skrepl at Stencuv Dum (the devastated former publishing house in the centre of Prague). The group exhibition, "That's What's left", "attempted to comment about our era, regardless of the different ways of living in it" trying also to define sense of belonging and sense of being in a particular place.(22)

This type of examination of the strength of one's identity brought apprehension and an inability to provide firm answers. The situation was not surprising, but rather confirmed the well known state. Trying to asses the case of young Czech contemporary art, its possible to say that the strengthening of this art through a developmental process has not yet been anchored in particular style, but through "the antagonists abilities to separate from the other generations and embark on individual search."(23)

Therefore, for the foreign dealers, the most significant art remains the one produced during the 1960's and 1970's, which so far has attracted the biggest interest, and publicity and understanding. Interest in the youngest artists grows steadily, but the German art market, for instance, seems to be reluctant to reveal its preferences. In order to counterbalance foreign taste and react to the in-coming waves of fashion, Pague needs to grow in a few years to become as influential cultural centre, able to give priority to its own artistic currents.

Such growth of Prague's reputation needs to happen quite quickly now. The reasons are simple, Prague at the moment is in the strongest position among the cities in Central Europe, and therefore may well represent Central Europe on the international stage. Secondly, it is high time that this city changes its status from being passively admired to becoming a more active force in shaping cultural policy.

It is hoped that such ventures as the Art Fair in Prague, launched by the Avencourt Exhibition, will contribute to the interest and dynamics of the art world in Prague. For the past two years, Avencourt Exhibitions Ltd, have managed successfully to launch a Book Fair and a Library Fair, bringing together for the first time in Eastern Europe Art Book Publishers, illustrators and designers to promote Czech literature and encourage direct selling of foreign titles. This event soon became vital for European Community as an important source of "free flow information". It has served to open up the market in the region, and has been seen as a gate for Polish, Russian, Hungarian publishers. The success of the Book Fair gave confidence to the organizers to expand the idea and organize an Art Fair.(24)

The first attempts were made in May 1993 and in the following May. The two initial Art Fairs have been accommodated in the Palace of Culture, and the organizers mainly invited Museums to participate. The reasons for such a strategy were both internal and external.

Internal, as we may call it, were the initial contacts of their organizers of the Book Fair, who naturally have been

co-operating with the publishers servicing biggest Museums in France, like the Reunion des Musees Nationaux or the Getty Museum Publications. Their contacts drew the interest of the J.P. Getty Museum in the Art Fair. This situation provided safe ground for the Art Fair, since it had strong support from the Book Fair and at the same time sustained the strength of the co-operation between such non-profit making institutions as the National Museum and the publishing houses aiming for new commissions. The external situation can be described as the great need for giving support to the Czech Republic art institutions, to provide enough finances to develop the idea further. In order to help the authorities to identify with this project as something for which they can take responsibility, Avencourt Exhibitions managed to coordinate presentations from the National Museum, the National Gallery of the Czech Republic, the Museum of Decorative Arts and The Czech Museum of Arts. This was the first step to signal the seriousness of the idea. The Art Fair has not yet managed to attract big commercial galleries from Europe and the USA, but as the reputation slowly builds up, this goal is to be achieved in 1995 and in 1996. There is understandable apprehension and at the same time sympathy for the project from the art dealers in Geneva, Vienna and Dusseldorf.(25)

Paradoxically enough, the situation could be solved by the belief in its potential financial success by the most influential art dealers, like David Juda from London, Hans Mayer from Dusseldorf, Walter Storms from Munich and Hans Knoll from Vienna and Eric Franck from Geneva. The status of

the Fair would definitely rise with speculation about their possible contribution. But, even without their participation, the Art Fair in Prague must show its character through the domestic galleries and Czech and Slovak presentations. This is why the participation of the most dynamic galleries from Prague itself, Bratislava and Brno is important. Further links of this kind must be established with neighbouring countries like Poland, and Hungary, Russia and Slovenia. With the participation of these countries, Prague has a good chance to be seen a valuable meeting point of the Eastern and Western artists.

This idea has been recognized by the European Commission which has developed further its project "Town Squares of Europe", incorporating Prague. As far as the role of the city is considered the idea from the beginning has been fully recognised by the European Commission which hosted the reception of the openings in 1993 and 1994, and started acting as official sponsor of the Art Fair from this year.(26)

The commitment of the European Commission has also significant political resonance as the first step into realisation of the Copenhagen Summit in June 1993, which concluded with the understanding that "the associated countries should be fully integrated into European Union".(27)

Every year the event attracts more and more participants. Therefore in 1995 it is to be hoped that saying in Prague "there is not enough money" will not play a major role in decision making. We can especially hope that "corporate and individual collecting" grows among the more affluent parts of



the societies in the Czech Republic, Poland and even Russia.(28) Next year the weight is going to move from the formal institutions, such as museums, to the independent, commercial galleries, which will change quite dramatically the image of the Fair. From the widely exhibited, "classical avant-garde", artists, the interest should move to the younger generation of artists, in order to provide European-wide confrontation and dialogue, which in next decade will become best cultural bridge in Europe and hopefully further afield.

The overall situation in the art promotion sector in Central Europe varies strongly. Poland, inspite of years of contacts and experience, lacks the infrastructure and access to well coordinated funding, while the Czech Republic needs a few more years of experience of art promotion in order to support its culture more effectively. Both must learn and work on establishing strong art market, which soon must become the main source of income. Otherwise there will be constant dependency on sponsorships, which will significantly slow the improvement of the promotion of a vital art.



Notes:

1. Interview with Vaclav Bostik, one of the most prominent artists of the older generation, Prague, September 1993.
2. Alena Potuckova, 'Introduction' in: Mid-Bohemian Gallery, catalogue Prague 1990.
3. Interview with Walter Storms, Walter Storms Gallery Munich, August 1992.
4. Interview with Anne-Lise Lenz owner of the collection Lenz - Schonberg, Bonn, May 1994.
5. Interview with Jan Cerny, Director of the MXM Gallery, Prague, September 1993.
6. Interview with Jiri Sevcik, Art critic and curator, Director of the collection of contemporary art at the St Agnes Mount in Prague, Bonn, May 1994.
7. Ibid.6
8. Interview with Radka Freislebenova, Director of Gallery Via Art, Prague, September 1993.
9. Behemot gallery, catalogue, Behemot Gallery Publication, Prague 1992.
10. Interview with Dr. Zdenka Mrlinova, Director of the Czech Visual Art Foundation "Muzaion", Prague, September 1993.
11. Gallery MXM, catalogue, Publication Proxima, Prague 1991.
12. Jiri & Jana Sevcik, 'Zur anderer Zeit'in: Post security, Aktuelle Kunst aus Prag, catalogue, Galerie 5020, Salzburg, 1993.
13. ibid. 12.
14. Jiri & Jana Sevcik, 'Introduction' in: Gallery MXM 1992, 1993, Galerie MXM Publication, Prague 1993.
15. ibid.11
16. Interview with contemporary Russian artist George Pusenkoff, Cologne, May 1994.  
( George Pusenkoff is represented by the Hans Mayer in Dusseldorf, lives and works in Cologne).

17. Dr Tomas Prochazka, MXM Gallery, catalogue  
Policy of the gallery of the director, Galerie MXM  
1991, Prague 1991.  
( Dr Prochazka died in a car accident the same year).
18. Vlasta Cihakova- Noshiro, Catalogue : Archetypes,  
Manes, Prague, 1993.
19. Motorway Manifesto was presented at the Polish Institute  
in London, Cross roads exhibition, contemporary art from  
Central Europe, March 1994.
20. ibid.12
21. ibid.19
22. ibid.19
23. ibid.11
24. Interview with Marie - Claude Shashoua the director of the  
Avencourt Exhibitions Ltd, London, June 1994.
25. Ibid. 20
26. Official catalogue, International Book Fair & Writer's  
Festival. Libraries Now. Art in Prague, SLG Business  
Services ( London), 1994.
27. Extracts of the speech of Leopoldo Giunti, Ambassador of  
the European Commission in Prague, in: Official catalogue,  
International Book Fair & Writer's Festival. Libraries  
Now. Art in Prague, SLG Business Services (London) 1994.
28. Interview with Walter Storms, Director of the Walter  
Storms Gallery in Munich, Bonn 1994.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### 'Problems and potentials': the context for regional initiatives in art promotion.

Art promotion in countries like Poland and the Czech Republic varies in intentions, professionalism and initial aims, not least due to different sources of support. Individual policies of the formal and non-formal institutions are not fully coordinated which is characteristic for a transitional period of the reconstruction of the countries after 40 years of suppressed initiatives.

Today after nearly of half of the decade following the Berlin Wall coming down, the ideas in the cultural sector of the countries still face an atmosphere of instability in cultural values, especially in the small communities and small regions of Central Europe. At the same time the new political and new administrative orders being set up in Europe, strive to build on the regional initiatives and resources of successful cooperation and unity. What stops the development in the cultural sector of the countries like Poland or Slovakia?

Negation of the past and uncertainty, coupled with the absence of the funding, seem to be the most significant problems. One of the latest, urgent and unresolved issues is the long term cultural policy for the whole country, in the case of Poland, as well as the need for new infrastructure facilitating information and communication with potential partners.(1)

The enthusiasm and ideas of the young generation at the

beginning of 1990's faced the problem of the lack of cultural policies in small towns and provincial regions. Nevertheless the freedom and possibility of realisation of a variety of projects led many to start their careers and to the establishing of foundations for future dynamic action.

In those historical moments, decentralisation seemed to form some kind of answer to the energetic little towns. The next step appeared to be the rise of a bigger awareness in the need to take over the functions of the "central institutions", like the Ministry of Culture and Arts, and on a smaller scale, to establish regional governmental bodies. This structure must naturally include the cultural sector, and take over the financial and general support for the arts in a new, reformed way. Those structures carry the most important task of creating cultural policy for the regions and to make it last, and evolve according to the needs of the society. Simultaneously, the relevant sectors of law and economy must also improve. The abilities to share and transmit information and the capability to cooperate with other centres in the country and abroad will be most significant for the stability of the developments further on.

As mentioned before, the regional governmental bodies must recognise the whole range of their responsibilities, including the sector of culture/art. Therefore the awareness of the cultural needs of the society should influence distribution of finances on the regional and country level. With time, there should be also support available from the business circles where the reformed tax system should allow

and encourage the donations for the arts.(2)

Looking for the examples in other countries which might give inspiration, firstly it will be worth pointing out the case of Germany, where the 1/3 system of subsidy allowed many exhibitions to be realised. The needed sum is usually split equally between the governmental bodies of the region, city, and the gallery or other source. As in any system this one has its down side. A successful application for a grant, whereby 1/3 is already guaranteed, means that the rest of the finances will almost certainly become available. On other hand, if the 1/3 grant is refused, then project is practically buried. Another formula for subsidising the art world was for sometime exercised by the Dutch government, where each year the Ministry of Culture was buying works of art from chosen artists as the mean of supporting them. Unfortunately this action was abandoned. Nevertheless it is true that this type of solution was helpful, even on a small scale, as it gave an opportunity to artists from small town and villages.

Each country has worked out its own policy and its own solution to offer help for the often undersubsidised art world. Each formula is specific. In Britain until middle 1980's, there was the tax relief for those who bought the work of art of the value over 600 GBP for a public collection.

Trying to translate those formulas into the Polish situation, straight away we will discover that recently the biggest obstacle in encouraging private persons to subsidise the art world, is the introduction of VAT. This new taxation has taken the overheads which might have been invested in the

art world. It is specially painful, because the budget for the arts is divided anyway to support conservation of the historic monuments and for support of the contemporary art projects. Dependent on democracy as well as on the free initiative of the individuals and the pressure of the institutions, we witness two vital directions of the cultural politics in Poland. First is one rooted in geo-political conditions, such as the interests of the eastern border-relations with the Ukraine and the Baltic States. Bearing in mind the Polish minority over there, this region gained a priority for subsidy.(3)

Secondly, and still in a way of the highest priority, comes the dream to join the European Union as an equal member. This dream, with changed political circumstances, became less emotional but more methodical in action. The base for the dream remains the individual contacts and the creative idea of "one Europe". One of methods which has been available, inspite of the fact that Poland has not been a member state of the EEC, is the idea of "town twinning". Although the status of non-member State did not make Central Europe particularly popular for the cooperation the links did initiate further contacts.(4)

Nevertheless, still a few years after the launching of the project in 1988, the percentage of the participants in town-twinning was relatively small and dictated mostly by the political agenda. Germany for instance has two-thirds of its partner-towns in France. As regards Eastern Europe, most twinning schemes are with "Soviet" municipalities, followed by

Hungarian and Polish towns.(5) What is very promising is that often the genuine need for the exchanges between the artists, art centres and the innovative organisers of the "open-air artistic workshops" break down the political preferences. Even the market, hungry for new works, can be perceived in a positive way as a means of looking for talent without the artificial divisions of the "Eastern" and "Western" artist. These kinds of initiatives definitely strengthen the role of the region as a direct patron of culture.

International projects not only involve two towns but also combinations like that recently worked out in the cooperation between Manheim (Germany), Swansea (Britain) and Bydgoszcz (Poland).(6)

The scale of the organisation also warrants support from the international cultural bodies which help with publications and transport. Often the non-commercial shows lead to the infiltration of the market through the interest of the collectors and dealers. So even non-commercial experience in cultural exchange and group exhibitions supplies ideas to the financial sectors of art. This aspect is also very important, in that an art market in Poland has not been fully developed yet. The biggest problem of the undeveloped market is the initial lack of flexibility of the prices, and badly worked-out prices, which are in many cases too high. The unrealistic spread of the prices has its roots in the lack of competition among the dealers. This is understandable if we take into consideration the fact that society itself has not fully recognised the value of the work of art as a commodity or

investment. The element of practically having to create the market from scratch, with buyers operating in conjunction with dealers, is maybe the most significant factor emerging in the beginning of the new era. Further support for the arts directly from the society, although it has been recognized as an urgent need, will have to wait for more confident economic structures in order to secure continuous sponsorship.

A better economic climate would also help commercial developments concerning arts. There are regions in Poland which appoint high percentage of their budget for the culture, but in many cases final sum of money is still relatively small, because of the internal regional problems.(7)

The situation is difficult and at some points frustrating, especially in that there are quite a few capable professionals in the field of curating, but obstacles still lie in the infrastructure and finances. Examining the situation of any private gallery in a small town, we may say that the opportunity to make progress in the most ambitious dimensions of the profession is almost impossible. Often some galleries practice the idea of the "one day exhibition", in order to cut the costs of the event. In order to survive some galleries rent half of their space to shops or other private ventures. One of the reasons lies in the selling of works of art by the artists directly from their workshops.

The elimination of the gallery as a middleman and also the lack of the permanent buyers creates a dangerous situation, in which the gallery as a contemporary archive for the chosen artists cannot support itself. The gallery as a



permanent or occasional exhibiting place in a commercial society has tremendous difficulty to find the means to exist, without the active interest and active support of the local community. In a new economic era where the aims completely changed everybody seemed to concentrate on themselves and to work on immediate success, as there was no trust in slow progress and gradual development.(8) This atmosphere especially characterised Central and Eastern Europe.

At the same time it will be worth to mentioning that the "changes" had a very interesting impact on the stylistics of the arts where the spirit of the experiment and philosophy came back. But, paradoxically, the interest of the society moved somewhere else. The free market offered opportunities for the "millions of new businessmen", and this became the main area of interest. Also for the new affluent class the "safest way" to invest in culture has been the buying of antiques and 18/19th century paintings.

On one hand such a situation may have promised quicker economical stabilisation, but at the same time the worry concerning the negligence of cultural affairs casts a great shadow over the society. The major concern is loosing the best artists, on account of the poor infrastructure, undeveloped market and lack of support. In a very simple way, the best talents are going to be "bought" by foreign dealers. To avoid such a situation in future, bigger emphasis should be placed on education, where at an early stage any interest and belief in contemporary art values can be implanted. There are definitely many levels on which art, culture might have a

chance to flourish, even if it is going to be in an unknown gallery in the far region of the country.

Economically strong regions should look after the exhibiting centres. Therefore the distribution of the finances should be reformed, especially when we consider that in many cases more money was spent on the openings or on travelling for the institutional representatives than on the exhibition itself. This reform would mainly tackle the problem of the bureaucracy and the decisions concerning the support for the projects, where nothing other than artistic points would matter in discussion. Often the selection is against young or unestablished artists, and old connections serve to gain places in the exhibitions. Of course this does not prevail everywhere, but under those circumstances what is most frustrating is that the speed of the progress is slowed and opportunities often disappear. The recognition of priorities is most important. On the other hand there is no doubt that art has never been free from "politics", but it is vital that the driving force of any arrangements be used for art not against it. The improvements would definitely help to make all those small centres more culturally confident.(9)

One of the ways to achieve confidence in showing and promoting culture independently is the ability to take over initiative and expertise to coordinate projects successfully. Those skills are specially needed in the area of promotion of your own national or local culture in today's competitive and cosmopolitan Europe. The situation is slightly better in the art publishing sector, in which profit is more naturally

available with some projects.

There are also more Galleries trying to work within the international network from smaller places, like the Anna Karenska Gallery from Poznan, the Zderzak Gallery from Cracow, and struggling for recognition in the applied arts section of the contemporary dealing world, such as the Opened Gallery from Bydgoszcz. Contemporary art, even when seen as difficult art, can still bring many interesting possibilities. Amongst the most promising news for the arts in Poland is the very interesting gesture by business circles in trying to restore the idea of "patronage" for the most interesting artists. The initiative came out from the closed circle of the "Golden Card Club", under the agenda of the "Businessman magazine". Each year, the club will be giving an "Award from the art Patron" for the most spectacular achievements in the visual arts, film and literature. Businessmen-patrons promise also further support for the awarded artists as needed when promoting them abroad and in the country.(10)

It is definitely very important in the times of privatisation and changing financial priorities not to allow politics to omit arts because they are a non-profitable venture. The other important aspect concerns need for a rising belief and trust that art can be stable commodity and investment for company purposes. This formulation is maybe a bit too blunt, but it will be worth exercising many new ways for the arts to achieve a strong place in Polish society after the changes of 1989. Another example which depicts the movement towards the incorporating the arts within the

business world and helping in the international promotion can be seen in a "Business of art" exhibition.

The idea of the exhibition came to be realised at the Polish Business Centre in London presenting the works of the artists from Bydgoszcz gathered together by the sculptor Michal Kubiak, also with the support of the cultural division of the Town Hall of Bydgoszcz, in the person of Mr Sliz. The interest in the arts had been expressed by the Polish Business Centre already at the opening of their premises on the 17th November 1993, when the Opened Gallery was invited to exhibit mouth-blown artistic glass. Encouraged and inspired by the possibility of the using the interiors of PBC, the chairman Mr Maciej Skarbonkiewicz decided to widen his invitation to other artists from the town of Bydgoszcz to exhibit in London. The exhibition took place at the premises of the PBC as well as in a negotiated nearby empty office space from the London Corporation. Expenses have been shared between the Town Hall which covered transport and PBC which provided the exhibiting space. This very first event of such a kind, gathering more than fifty works (including artistic glass), which aimed to introduce the most significant works of art from the North of Poland.

One can argue that the commercial institutions are not fully prepared for handling the contemporary art exhibitions in the same way as a public or private gallery. The guests and the number of the viewers are different, and finally art may not get the proper understanding or attention. The questions are so many, but at the same time what is the most important

is that the works get seen and introduced to the part of the society which should consider its relevance in working environment. Secondly, this example shows another aspect of cooperation in which a commercial institution abroad works with the artists from a lesser known region of the country. And this is definitely worth mentioning on account of the kind of independent regional initiatives that can be realised even abroad.

So far, the so-called BWA (Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych-The state galleries) have been the only exhibiting spaces where the artist from the small town could exhibit. There was practically no choice of any other gallery, in a provincial city. Some of the state galleries managed to create interesting programmes in their premises, although they were not very well subsidised due to cut finances, and the choices and possibilities have shrunk dramatically. Another factor for lower levels of art being shown lies in the abilities of the curators to obtain project funding. The most successful were people working with the post avant-garde style in bigger museums or galleries, like the Museum of Art in Lodz run by Mr Stanislawski. Due to international recognition and diplomatic abilities, the industrial town became known as the centre of the Polish avant-garde style of art shown in big group exhibitions in Germany, Holland or France.

For a long time there was strange balance between state supported folk art and support for avant-garde art. Now with the bigger freedom in a decentralised country it will be interesting to see where different styles will emerge from,

and which region will produce what kind of style.

Such differences are very important to sustain, and this is the way in which style will be given freedom, allowing them to gain recognition and success on no other basis than those of aesthetic and philosophical values. The role of the regional cultural policy is going to be essential in achieving those objectives.(11)

Firstly at the basic level comes the Art School, and secondly there is the possibility of group and individual exhibitions, which can be seen as sources of artistic confrontations among the painters or sculptors. In order to illustrate this, I will present a western project which incorporates eastern countries and which proved very successful in allowing international workshops and further improvement of skills.

The initiative comes from Edinburgh in Scotland and involves the Lothians region. The project is called "The development Programme of the Edinburgh College of Art-Festival Summer School in the Visual Arts". The person who devised the idea, Ms Geraldine Prince, cooperated with the director of 369 Gallery, Andrew Brown, to bring into realisation a project answering the needs for a European dimension. The Region, the City and Edinburgh College of Art have been brought into the project. The whole plan was simple, and not new, as Ms Prince wrote in her 1991 dossier. Earlier on such schools have been operating in Glasgow, Dundee, East Anglia, and Malta, unfortunately not very successfully.

The programme in Edinburgh was based on the cultural

traditions of the region and the city, run by highly professional personnel, and aimed to draw from its institutional resources as well as from its commercial galleries. Bringing together artists, art teachers, cultural managers and dealers, it covered nearly every aspect of art promotion. At the same time this programme provided a very promising and modern network which brought benefits for the School, for the pupils (exhibitions, new contacts), for the project coordinators (networking), for the dealers (opportunity to see works of unknown artists), and for the City and its tourists (bringing them to the galleries and exhibitions and organizing the visual arts event in return).

The project was inspired at the beginning by the need to improve contacts with other "Fine Art schools" in Europe.

The intention of the InTEReD Initiative was not only cooperation between the European Union members but also aimed at new contacts in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1991 this was a big step forward, especially considering that the project was ahead the official European policy concerning cooperation with Eastern counterparts.(12)

It is vital to point out the entrepreneurial aspect of that kind of project, which under particular political circumstances may well be aiming ahead of official policies.

A non-member state ( e.g. Poland) was included in the European Community artistic network by the member state, Scotland in the UK, on purely artistic merits. This situation in itself made very significant political statement. This statement definitely proves the point of the power of the cultural



sector which due to its nature may pave the way towards changes and innovations quicker than parliaments. The cultural sector also has an important power in indicating needs creative part of the society.

For the arts themselves, well planned promotion, and growing interest in the visual arts leads to improvement in modern cultural management and the modern approach to education. Therefore the strength of culture as the most effective means of international communication has been used in the InTERed project with great understanding. The programme of InTERed has been foreseen in all its stages. The first stage has been the teaching year, with the idea of receiving many guests from all over the world. Based on the interest of the participants next year, the project has been taking place in their own country, although the whole staff remained the same.

Though the core structure of the organizers usually consists of Scottish people at the introductory stage, gradually and more fully in the following year the idea is being taken up by the local organizers in their own countries. Through this project, certain ideas and organizing skills are being transferred to new places.

Finally, former pupils of the "Scottish cultural programme" may run this idea independently in their own country, encouraging less dynamic participants, such as teachers, with a view to improving skills of people who may themselves become partners in the future. An extremely valid outcome in the future lies in helping less developed countries



with their cultural infrastructure, in order to find partners in the very near future. There is also the very interesting factor that this course covers needs of the artists and needs of the curators both commercially and non commercially.

The role of the commercial galleries is to introduce guide, and give advice on the mechanisms and needs of the market itself. Even on that kind of introductory basis, lectures, meetings and even practical action would bring considerable benefits for both sides. The owner or the staff of the commercial gallery, for instance, get the opportunity of contacting the artists in their early stage of development and also of direct cooperation with non-commercial institutions. Because at one level the goal is the same concerning contemporary art; that is to gather information on the artists, to promote and exhibit their work. Such cooperation helps to transcend economic and political borders.

Politically, as mentioned before the initiative allows non-member states to participate at the most important early stage in developing working networks and filling the gap between commercial and non-commercial worlds. For countries like Poland and the Czech Republic, the possibility of being considered as partners the "PanEuropean" networking brings opportunity to present their culture in more effective way, where joint funding allows the realisation of big international group exhibitions and touring exhibitions. Under those circumstances there are more opportunities for young artists, and for their immediate incorporation in the international promotion, which in some cases may lead into

successes on a commercial basis. There are many good points of the such ventures, and InTEReD, as an idea originally based on the student exchanges, has evolved into extremely interesting partnership.(13)

A different type of cooperation, with differently structured priorities (although also based on a regional initiative), is the project involving the county of Kent, Nord-Pas De Calais, the region of Brussels, the region of Valois and north Flanders. The main aim is to create an "Euroregion" as stated in the Memorandum from the 21. 6. 1991, which would allow the creation of an environment in which one of the most significant ties would be the cultural cooperation.

Cooperation based on the historical and neighbourhood ties, where the advantage has always been the closeness of the participants, became a strong motivation for the sector of the private initiatives and public sector including cultural exchanges and tourism. Due to very good information and research on the parts of the most interested regions, Nord-Pas De Calais and Kent frequently organize group exhibitions for the most interesting artists in their regions. Selection as always has been based on curatorial criteria nevertheless those projects each time stand a good chance to be subsidised because in a natural way the visual arts contribute to the cultural affairs, and the benefit is definitely mutual. As mentioned before, the transport due to relatively small distances is affordable, and there are often finances supporting modest catalogues. If the project is successful, it

also stands a chance to tour round the public galleries in the "Euroregion".(14) Those frequent activities serve to make the regional governmental bodies remember the importance of the allocation of the finances for exhibitions related and publication. Although the political and economical aim was to strengthen the relation among the members of the European Union, participants are also interested in cooperation with Central Europe (with a view to further developments).

In this respect, it will be worth remembering that Central Europe has still been perceived more as one unit than as separate countries. Therefore there are no significant preferences as to which country is seen more favourably. In majority of cases they are equally unknown as partners in the international projects.

At the beginning, this situation was difficult for countries which were emerging as fully independent culturally and politically. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia needed separate recognition, but in a way still have not enough power to act separately when it came to bigger international projects, mainly for financial reasons.

The situation has been complicated because there has been very mixed feelings on the as yet impossible membership of the European Union and the need to be seen as fully independent countries. What has also proved difficult was ability "to associate among those countries for furtherance of (...) common aims", due to "the experience of the imposed cooperation of the Warsaw Pact".(15)

Under those circumstances the romantic idea of "Central

Europe/ Mitteleuropa" (multinational state within the Austro-Hungarian Empire) revived by the historians and academics in initial discussions concerning new Europe could not have played major role, and there has been a strong apprehension in creating the political and economic structure which would act as halfway association to the full membership of the EC.

The final signing of the documents between the four countries in May 1990 in Bratislava, known as the "Vysehrad Group" agreement, can be seen as a wise and very sensible cause of action. "What each country lack individually could be compensated for collectively"- as George Kolankiewicz has said.

The above statement describes very well the benefits for the cultural sector, which should be coming from the establishing of the "Central European region". Unfortunately the idea of "Central Europe" perceived as one unit, has never been properly coordinated, and due to the apprehensions on the Czech side, idea has never taken off properly in politics.(16)

In culture because of different attitudes and different situations, "Central Europe" has always had more chance to develop further. In spite of difficulties in coordinating such big administrative unit, especially when compared to the size of other Western regions, networking and cooperation in arts became the most successful field.

The joint ventures, especially the bigger cultural events, proved to be successful, in the same way as for the western "Euroregion". One of them has been realised at the

Polish Cultural Institute in London with the cooperation of the Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian Embassies through out March 1994.

A multimedia project has been started by the presentation of the student's short films and by musical concerts in London featuring young musicians from the various countries. Finally, in the sector of the visual arts, the Polish Cultural Institute showed at its premises the "Cross roads" exhibition of contemporary art. Graduates from Fine Arts Academies of Prague, Bratislava, Cracow, Lodz, Budapest showed a variety of works ranging from installations and video to works in traditional media. The aim of the exhibition was more philosophical and sociological than artistic. The event examined the problem of freeing artists from the atmosphere and experiences prior to the changes of 1989 and examined the impact of the hardship they went through on the artistic character of these people. Their judgement of the environment and of the new reality bring an interesting comparison of both eras, on the threshold of which those young people happened to work. Each group is different according to the stylistics of the country they come from. The exhibition very clearly showed the differences within the "Central European" group of the artists.

Especially individual were the philosophical works of the Czech artists whose hyper-realistic style has been supported by the written statements signalling disillusion in contemporary society.

Completely different were works of the Hungarian artists whose

art seems to be rooted in the last decade, with the use of a variety of media (video etc.) portraying the confusion and fear of the future. The whole initiative gave possibility of the very first international exhibition and in some cases the very first exhibition at all to a number of artists. Therefore, the hardship of the artists in the new economical situation has been rewarded and brought into light through a very important promotion. The awareness of the need for such action has been expressed in a great way by the organizers. There is no doubt that this initiative is still very much a drop in the sea of needs, but it signals an awareness and recognition of the strength of the "regional" projects and need for support of the young unknown artists. That kind of policy on the level of the formal institutions can bring successes in the future.

Although personally I am not a great enthusiast for the projects realised by the big institutions, this time there is an interesting indication that there is a drive towards the direct promotion of artists and an attempt to infiltrate contemporary art into the integrating Europe.

So far the contemporary art achievements by artists from Central/Eastern Europe were known only individually. This time there is a chance to facilitate the traffic on the level of unknown artists and unknown galleries. The attempt is motivated by the simple desire to acquaint the public with a wide international selection of work and on other hand to bring to the Polish or Czech artists the very simple opportunity of an exhibition in Brighton, Calais or Aachen.

Particularly noteworthy is a fact-finding trip for artists, visual arts curators and the educators from the South East Region of England to Poland, with a view to setting up a series of exchange exhibitions between the regions.(17)

The initiative originates from the Frontiers Conference in April 1993. Contacts made at the conference established the ground for number of exchanges and visits across Europe.

An exploratory visit to Poland aimed at finding artists, groups and organizations in a similar sized town and also make contacts at the main galleries and museums.

All the events are definitely having a great impact on the visiting young artists who have the possibility to learn and to refine their knowledge and beliefs. At that very early stage of their artistic life, this investment on the part of the organizers, may bring a lot in the future.

The whole problem of the promotion of art has a variety of angles and may be discussed in many ways. The situation concerning its promotion of the Central European countries still seems to have many potential points of development due to the changing political status of those countries and due to the complex process of their integration within the European Union.

The presented examples show, mainly within regional initiatives, new factors of effective art promotion, like the one concerning Polish Business Centre's direct promotion of the contemporary art from one region. Secondly the promotion of the "place and art" by the Scottish InTEReD project and cooperation within the "Euroregion" created by three countries

cooperation" has been presented in the "Vysehrad Group" where the political reasons facilitated the finding of support for the culture and art. Each case introduces slightly different priorities, although the aim is definitely one; that is to secure the importance of the arts and to secure their funding, as art has proved to be the most effective means of communication between the peoples involved.



Notes:

1. Interview at the Ministry of Culture and Art in Warsaw, Poland, December 1992.
2. Interview with Anda Rottenberg, Director of the Zacheta Gallery, Warsaw, January 1993.
3. Interview with Prof. Maria Poprzecka, Art History Dept. Warsaw University, September 1993.
4. A Europe of town and cities. Practical guide to town-twinning, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxemburg 1992.
5. *ibid.* 4
6. Interview with Henryk Sliz, Cultural department of the Town Hall of the city of Bydgoszcz/ Poland, London, February 1994.
7. *ibid* 1
8. Dariusz Jachimowicz, 'The artist is not left to himself': Art & Business, No 5/6, Dialog Ltd, Poznan, 1993.
9. Interview with Beata Bochinska, director of the Opened Gallery in Bydgoszcz, Bydgoszcz, September 1993.
10. Information from : Art & Business, No 9/10, Dialog Ltd, Poznan, 1993.
11. Interview with Dr A. Bedkowski, Director of the Centre of the Animation, Institute of Culture in Warsaw, Warsaw January 1993.
12. Interview with Ms Geraldine Prince, co-ordinator of the INTeReD Programme, Edinburgh, December 1992.
13. Interview with Andrew Brown, Director of the 369 Gallery in Edinburgh, Edinburgh, February 1993.
14. Interview with John Brazier, Head of Arts Promotion, Kent County Council, Arts & Libraries, Canterbury, Frontiers Conference, April 1993.
15. George Kolankiewicz, 'Consensus and competition in the eastern enlargement of the EU' : International Affairs, Volume 70, no 3, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Cambridge University Press, July 1994, pp 478.
16. Interview with V. Meciar, 'Wprost', 13 February 1994.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### International art market - different conditions: new alliances, old friends in the Polish, Czech, Russian art promotion.

The first years of the opening of independent galleries in "former East-European Block" countries coincided with a major downturn in the economic and art market. Anyone starting a new commercial contemporary art gallery, encountered the overlapping difficulties of the European/world economy, which did not give much chance to the commercial aspects of cultural sector, and the financial struggles during transformation of the socialist economy into the free market. It is possible to say that galleries in Poland used to the extremely hard situations, like the Zderzak from Cracow or Anna Karenska from Poznan (including the public spaces like Museum of Modern Art in Lodz) managed to preserve their policy, interest and artists. These aspects of their existence as contemporary art gallery became their biggest asset. The same can be said about newly established Czech galleries that their importance so far lies rather in attempts to organize artistic centres where artists can find professional help in effective promotion and marketing of their works. The weakest point still definitely comes from lack of experience in "effective marketing" and the unlucky situation of a "new investor without sufficient financial back up".(1)

Therefore it is no surprise that first steps into the "Western market" during the Art Fairs in Cologne and Frankfurt brought heavy deficits to the Central European galleries. The situation there had to a certain extent an

"existential" flavour because this was the first time that the Central European artists had their representatives from their own countries available at the fair, marking a new territory ready for exchanges and exhibitions. Yet they could hardly keep solvent financially, given the stagnant market and high costs of participation. The newly established Gallery MXM and Behemot went through really hard times at the threshold of the 1980's/1990's. Today the situation is not much better, although improvements are visible. In 1993 the financial result of the changing atmosphere at the FIAC (Formation de L'information de Action Culturelle) the Art Fair in Paris apparently signalled the beginning of the end of bad "art business". The income rose around 50 millions Fr compared with the previous year, although the best sellers were the relatively low priced works (800 Fr) and medium priced works (50 000 Fr).(2)

The atmosphere was the same at the Cologne Fair, where more was sold, though for lower prices. The prices ranged from 30 000 DM to 100 000 DM, based on the successful deals by Galerie Gmyrek Dusseldorf, which was selling works of Krieg, Chevalier, Finkeldei, Hodicke, and the Galerie Gmurzynska which dealt with the sales of earlier works of Feininger (15-30, 000 DM) and drawings of Malevich (80, 000 DM).

The situation was described up by the editor of Polish magazine Art & Business Hanna Osek : "as a result of the recession prices were lowered significantly, also selection of the works was wider."(3)

This atmosphere helped to open a market niche. The Anna

Karenska Gallery for the first time avoided criticism by offering works at low prices. This situation gave a chance to introduce good quality, unknown artists from Poland. This time less established artists had a chance for bigger sellouts due to new price-brackets dictated by the market. Works at the lower minimal margin of the prices went well, especially with the introduction of the Czech artists among the German and Austrian dealers. In Paris in October and in November in Cologne dealers, due to the financial trend, concentrated rather on maintaining clients and building new relations with the collectors rather than putting up the prices. The situation, then, became more promising leaving more hope for the Czech and Polish Galleries. It is true that the financial results were far from the boom of 1986/1987, but the situation was stabilising, giving a stronger position to those Polish and Czech artists who were climbing up "the ladder" and who were represented by the western galleries, like Benjamin Rhodes of London (artist Edward Dwurnik), and Karl Nordenhake of Stockholm (Miroslaw Balka) and the Got Gallery of Stuttgart (Jiri Anderle). Prices here were reaching between 6,000 and 18,000 DM. It was far easier for buyers to risk paying medium prices even for the less known art from Central Europe.(4)

It was no surprise that in the first instance interest spread in the earliest Polish and Russian "classical" avantgarde. In the 2-3 years after 1989 and after the Moscow coup in 1991, the fashion for "suprematism" and Russian avantgarde became even more established. The years 1991-1993

brought significant changes in the preferences for artistic style. Such galleries as Peter Pakesch from Vienna, Walter Storms from Munich and Ucher's from Cologne, who have been specialists, in contemporary Polish and Czech art for years, encountered the strong competition from the fashion for Russian contemporary art. The same can be said about the American market, especially in New York, where, as described by the art consultant and art dealer, Mrs Giombetti, that market generated "too much of the mainly very commercial art from Russia".(5)

The unstable market allowed room for the creation of "loop- holes", for quick financial success. Newly discovered contacts with artists and galleries from Russia and former "Soviet States" brought into the market semi-interesting works (compared respect to the representatives of very good Russian art). Art and the artists from Russia in many cases have been in a very vulnerable position where there has been practically no legal contracts which would protect them. On other hand the market has not been protected either against the artificial price spreads of the "new discoveries".

The atmosphere has been particularly criticised by the promoters of Polish and Czech art who have been working practically from the early 1970's supporting such artists as Stanislaw Kolibal, Vaclav Bostik, Adriana Simotova, Roman Opalka, and Strzeminski. Professional promotion contributed in those cases not only to the success of the individual artists but has had somehow further implications in building the ground for more global international co-operation.

The disappointment came not so long ago with the stabilising of the relations with the Central European dealers, when instead of the anticipated successes of the post-avantgarde style, the tradition of suprematism captured the interest of the buying public. The swing has been criticised by the most influential German critics, like Levi-Strauss, who were warning buyers and gallery curators against a shortsighted fashion which, in majority of the cases is not able to further long term artistic cooperation.(6) The buyers may experience in few years time a disaster like those who were investing in early 80's paintings, which were prematurely named as "priceless" with respect to their artistic concepts. With the desperate efforts to recoup the importance of such events as the Art Fairs, and with the attempts to gain recognition by the Galleries from Eastern European countries, the difficult situation definitely creates possibility of unsettling the market, which is very damaging for all concerned.

The damage conflicts with the need to encourage collectors and long term buyers who would like to see professional cooperation between the gallery and the artist, at the same time securing the artistic importance of the works, not simply exhibiting the market on the basis of "revelations" appearing great numbers on an insecure basis.

It is also obvious that further cooperation and building new routes in the art world between the mutual interests of East-West in the longer term should involve a lot more when thought about artistic, and philosophical confrontations, for

which a stable situation will be much more fruitful.

This very simple truth has been forgotten by the organizers of the First Eastern Art Fair in Hamburg (6-12 December 1993). Zwirner Intermarketing made very careful choice of the guests based on the research of its director Rudolf Zwirner, who personally travelled to the Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Hungary to meet and see the galleries. The idea of the Fair caused a lot of discussions among the art dealers.(7)

The dispute tackled the name of the fair, "eastern european", and whether it was really needed? Who has ever organized a "western european" art fair? Therefore the idea at the beginning seemed to be rather artificial. On one hand it is true that underlining the artistic and philosophical origin of the presented artists was a natural notion, but after 1989 even curators who were neutral to the problem would prefer to destroy the walls of the mental ghettos that separated artists, somehow always to the detriment of the "eastern artists".

The tone of that ghetto at the end was to some extent neutralised by the number of individual galleries from Germany, France, Sweden, USA, Italy and Britain having on board either only "eastern" artists or also representing them as part of their artistic programme. For instance the Galerie Spicchi dell'Este run by Stefania Piga represents such Polish paintings by Tadeusz Kantor (also creator of the avant-garde theatre Cricot 2), and works on paper by Franciszek Starowieyski (including his scenographic projects). Piga's cooperation with the artists reaches out to all the contacts



in those Polish centres which also work with the same people she is interested in. In order to obtain best expertise in addition to her own judgements, each time she invites French critics from "Le point" and Italian critics to write in the catalogues, even on the artists of the younger generation like Tomasz Tatarczyk and Jaroslaw Modzelewski. Here we have an example of artists being introduced to the Italian and even French public by this Roman gallery whose work means a lot to the circles involved in the promotion of the most interesting Polish artists.(8)

A very professional type of promotion has also been provided by British, gallery Benjamin Rhodes from London, commercially looking after Edward Dwurnik as his representative in Europe. In this case we can also talk about long term relationship building a ground for further recognition of the artist. Good examples of the proper art promotion are the Swedish Gallery of Karl Nordenhake, working closely with Mirosław Balka in conjunction with the Foksal Gallery from Warsaw, and the Vienesse Gallery of Peter Pakesh, supporting the Polish sculpture of Balka mentioned earlier, and paintings by Włodzimierz Pawlak and the Russian installationist Ilja Kabakov. These galleries are the most significant illustration of the circle of artists and art coordinators cooperating with the aim of creating successful art promotion with long term implications.

These contacts often bring to realisation big international projects. Such contacts are also primary sources of the information on the newly emerging styles or newly



emerging developments in major avant-garde ideas. So even in the commercial world, those values and the ideas of the presentation have important places. Therefore artists benefit from that kind of approach of the curators, otherwise "quick" deals taking advantage of the market can bring "even a promising artist into" dead end. That was the case of the approach in Hamburg which brought the danger not only of overpricing works but also of leaving them without a chance of a proper interest in the developing works, without even mentioning the role of documentation. The danger of setting up the market was already visible in the choice of the guests. There were 2 Italian Galleries, 2 Polish, 2 from the Czech Republic, 1 from Slovenia, 2 from Switzerland, 1 from USA, 1 from Belgium, 1 from France, 9 from Russia (mainly from Moscow) and 25 from Germany. From the very beginning the effort of the of the organisers was concentrated on the construction of the commercial ties between Russian galleries and German galleries, as seen from the number of invited German galleries which presented an impressive number of exhibiting places specialising in "Eastern/Central European" art.(9)

Russian art represented 70% of the presentations and among these nearly 50% was mainly the early Russian avant-garde from the 1920/30s, and the rest fairly young artists who began their careers at the beginning of the 1980's, like Ilja Kabakov, Elena Eljagina and D. Vrubel, and Sergej Kalinin.

The remaining 20% of the exhibitors were guests from Prague, like the Behemot Gallery, MXM Gallery, Galerie und

Verlag Mitteleuropa and Medium from Bratislava. There was almost no art from Hungary. There was no Hungarian representative once the Hans Knoll Gallery from Budapest officially refused to take part in the event when it found out that it was the only one invited.(10) The situation with former Yugoslavian Galleries was bit more tactful, because there were couple of galleries invited from Slovenia.

The Art Fair in Hamburg is indeed a very prominent example of the straight mixing of economics and politics. This Art Fair provides also an insight into the attempt to organize a platform for the co-operation within the East-West relations in a way that would set quite dangerous arrangements of preferences and priorities without considering the different laws of the developing countries.

This has been confirmed by the Rudolf Zwerner, who himself said that the choice of the guests was under "artistic and political preferences". According to the speaker, Germany had already started building useful economical relations with Russia, bearing in mind their commercial potential, and now the cultural sector needed to be arranged. Using the banner "First Eastern European Art", Zwerner Intermarketing managed to organize big meetings between German and Russian art dealers, supporting them with press promotion and information. According to Zwerner the core of the cooperation comprises the Moscow Galleries and the postconceptual style, with the offspring of the post-avantgarde style. All the institutions and publicly run places were omitted on the both sides. Incidents like the press promotion of Russian art only, and

invitations which omitted rest of the guests from Europe, plus the high charges demanded from the participants, left a great deal of disappointment. The situation partially cast a shadow over really interesting artistic achievements by other Russian artists. Hopefully, painters well protected by the Hans Mayer Gallery, like George Pusenkoff, or looked after by the Michael Schlieper Gallery, like Igor Sacharov-Ross, will never be associated with the "quick market sellouts" in Hamburg.

The Czech side openly reacted to the wrong attitudes at the Fair, some such as the director of the MXM Gallery, Jan Cerny, and the curator of the National Gallery of Contemporary art, Jan Sevcik, underlining their awkward feeling of being a "decoration" in the arena of German politics.(11)

The director of Zderzak Gallery from Cracow, Marta Tarabula, also reacted with anger and disappointment, pointing out a lack of interest in well-being of the participants on the organizer's side. The director of the Foksal Gallery, Wieslaw Borowski, and Karl Nordenhake from Stockholm had a more philosophical approach, by simply expressing their doubts in long term value of some of the works of art.(12) Fortunately, contemporary art not manipulated at the Art Fair in Paris (FIAC) or at the well known Art Cologne. There nobody would dare to take the advantage of the newcomers and simply organise a "market" place. There is also a very important lesson to be learnt by those galleries from Warsaw and Prague which are trying to attract commercial attention. Firstly, the interests are swinging, though the group of the professionals working on promotion of similar styles remains,

so co-operation and exchanges are always possible. Secondly, Art Hamburg shows how extreme and open the commercial wrestling can become. The most visible aspect of the Fair can be seen as a warning and may show the implication of the frustration caused by the downfall of the market where "revelations" seemed to be most sought-after on the way to quick success.

What is worrying under those circumstances is the lack of perspective in the long term and valid cooperation. Therefore all those newly attending the commercial events should undertake precise market research and look for the other galleries working with the same artists to establish relations, and to measure the expectations accurately, in order at least to become stronger in the face of the dangerous speculative market. Even at the early stage, Galleries from Poland, or Slovakia should be building lists of the collectors, and supporters who at some point may save them from big losses by purchasing objects from them.

The end of 1993 brought mixed feelings and a bigger awareness of the dangerous pitfalls. We may speculate that the tense atmosphere was also due to the fear of financial catastrophe, as had happened couple of months earlier in Brussels. There, inspite of very careful choice of only 80 galleries (only one has been invited from Poland, the Appendix Gallery), many experienced severe losses.

An overall view reflects anxiety and struggles, but what is very important that nobody gives up. Under present circumstances chances for the long term commitments of the

"eastern european" curators do exist but not for all. It is true that the economic crisis and structural instabilities in Europe do not build a steady ground for the prospects of anyone, but, taking into consideration the stage of the development of the art market in Poland, Hungary or the Czech Republic, the first steps must be undertaken now. There is no need to wait for further changes but increasingly to mark out by exhibitions and shows the existence of Slovak or Polish art. This has been done to a certain extent so far but there still are significant structural loopholes, due to which important projects and confrontations are never realised. Very often problems are of an economic nature and arise from the incompatibility of, for example, the Czech and Italian economies. Stefania Piga, the owner of the Gallery Spicchi dell'Este, when discussing main weak points in the cooperation with Polish artists pointed out the problem of the strategy of the prices. She does not have problems with artists who are living or have been living temporarily outside Poland like Franciszek Starowiejski, because the price spread is respected in Rome and in Paris without difficulty. The gallery has been given the rights to control the price and to keep it at a certain level. A different situation occurs with the artists living permanently in Poland, where works of painters such as Stasys Eidregevicus (a Lithuanian artist living in Poland) are available directly from the artist at much lower prices. In this case the impossibility of the price-control destroys the promotion and efforts to build a steady value for works by a particular "name". The situation when the artist sells

directly from his atelier is not a problem itself but when he or she sells under the agreed prices many unnecessary tensions occur.(13) Also, in this case it will be worth to taking into consideration the different price resistance in Italian and Polish markets. Since 1989, prices have definitely become closer to each other, but the differences are still big. So for the Warsaw artist it will be more profitable to sell to someone directly by the "Warsaw Price", than not to be able to do so, because the "Italian " price would be out of the reach of the home buyers. The solution seems to lie in closer cooperation and updating between the artist and the gallery, based on the a understanding of the minimum value of the works. Those kind of agreements are definitely the most important aspects of international commercial cooperation in the art world. The second aspect mentioned by the Swedish Gallery, Nordenhake, was aimed at immediate improvement of the infrastructure in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Karl Nordenhake pointed out that better transport, and communication and information which would allow putting artistic events on to the international stage much easier. A large part of the promotion requires dynamic and meaningful contacts and publicity, which automatically means that to extend into further circles in order to render a particular show important it is necessary that it is discussed in the media. Another obvious argument in the discussion was provided Walter Storms who for past twenty years has been involved in promotion of Polish and Czech contemporary art.

He pointed out the mental distance between East and West

where with some "decadent" Austrian or German collectors and commercial gallery curators, the biggest problem seemed to lie in low standard of the hotels or restaurants. Today, thus comment may bring out a bitter smile in recognising obstacles in the proper communication between the countries. In order to do that, established contacts and mutual alliances in art promotion are very important. Proper contextualisation of the exhibitions is definitely a necessary step in creating an interest amongst a public for whom artists from less popular countries are simply unknown.

The originally Polish gallery owners from Cologne Mr & Mrs Ucher confirmed the need for improved promotion of Central European art by saying that Polish or Czech art is known only in circles of special interest or publicly only through the big names. Therefore updated publications and even non-commercial exhibitions can be an answer for a problem. (14)

The aim of such presentations would be to give a chance to the public and to the curators to become interested and acquainted with the specific type of aesthetic or art philosophy characteristic of Polish or other Slav artists.

An example of such an activity is provided by the exhibitions of the Czech curator working in Germany, Mr Zdenek Felix. His presentation of the in the Kampnagel/Internationale Fabrik called "Situation Prague" as an independent event during the Art Fair in Hamburg made a very effective artistic statement.

The exhibition showed two generations of Prague artists working in the post-conceptual tradition. The sculpture and



installations represented by the "old avant-garde" Milan Knizak, Stanislav Kolíbal, and Karel Malich, have been juxtaposed with the young evolving ideas of Milena Dopitova, Peter Lysacek, Peter Pisarik. The event provided a very well researched insight into both continuity and changing artistic attitudes. The choice of the venue was also excellent.

The premises of the old factory suited the atmosphere of the works very well. Such a presentation, although noncommercial, was definitely helpful to the public and collectors in justifying the importance of those works.

The other dynamic Czech curator working in Germany is Noemi Smolik, the organizer of the exhibition "Wa(h)re Kunst" in the premises of the Hamburg Stock Exchange. Respect for the curator and for her choice allowed her to place the works in one of the least expected environments, which is very creative in itself. During the difficult phase in finding financial support for culture and art promotion, this kind of idea also helps to bring important attention for less known artists.

On the Polish side Ryszard Stanislawski is mostly recognised for his contacts and cooperation. He staged the biggest exhibition on the most spectacular achievements in Central European art called "Europe, Europe" at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn. (opened 26 May 1994 till October 1994).

The exhibition has showed wide choice in the presentation of 200 artists, based on careful research and a methodical approach. Two years of the preparation allowed him to make a choice of over 700 works of art shown in nine stylistic sequences also described as "thematic cycles" as : The outset



of the avant-garde; In the circle of cubism; Jewish presence; Surreal imagination; Politics against avant-garde, Expression and intuition; Systematic tendencies; and Transitional aspects. Each of the sections discusses philosophical and aesthetical tendencies in development of the avant-garde art based on highly significant artists such as : Kazimir Malevic, and Marc Chagall (Russia), Katarzyna Kobro, Wladyslaw Strzeminski (Poland), Christo (Bulgaria), Kupka (Czech Republic), and Brancusi (Romania). Alongside the well known artists (Plate 13.) there were also works by artists who were previously familiar only to small circles of the art historians or collectors in the West.

What is interesting and what also underlines the idea of European and Central European unity, is that events of this type do not aim to concentrate on the presentation of the particular country, which in a way would be against the nature of the avant-garde works of art. The whole construction of the internal architecture of the show designed by Stanislav Kolibal, facilitates "confrontation in the context of international art trends and styles".(15) Previously, documentation and contextualisation of individuals and artistic groups have been scarce. The achievements were virtually forgotten over the war and during the period of total inertia in the Czech Republic, Poland, Russia.

The exhibition provides major opportunity for art critics and art historians alike to catch up with the unfolding of another equally valid contemporary art heritage. The exhibition makes a great step towards the perception of a

wider European context within art itself, by attempting to fill in the gaps of knowledge. Thus very important statements are made on the Czech, Romanian, or Hungarian diversions of the cubism, fluxus art and paratheatrical action. Each translation is not "a pale reflection of Western stars" but actually demonstrates "direct precursors and independent discoveries".(16)

In this exhibition the post war section is specially valuable presenting to the gallery curators, project co-ordinators and collectors, previously unknown work with potential intellectual possibilities, a new art market and variations in artistic actions. In order to provide a wide vision Ryszard Stanislawski and his co-curator Christoph Brockhause engaged also different disciplines like architecture, literature, music, theatre and film. Such an approach unveiled interesting aspects of the integration of the disciplines within video- performance, para-theatrical actions and avant-garde cinema. Stylistic disparities were also revealed within these disciplines between works in Poland and in former Czechoslovakia and Western counterparts.

(Plate 14, 15.)

The meaning of such initiatives for successful European integration and proper art promotion is hard to measure. Definitely those projects strongly based on the real artistic and philosophical values that are resistant towards manipulation are specially important. Many viewers after visiting the Kampnagel for instance could go back to the exhibiting stalls and could compare works and values against

the commercial "propaganda". These examples underline need for sophisticated workshops for the art promoters and art managers, in order to protect and bring out the best out of individual paintings and sculpture. Current situations and fashions show clearly that the "sentimental era" is over and that the tough rules are for the newcomers as well. There is still time for representatives of the Central European art to learn and time to take initiatives. Hopefully the major presentation "Art in Prague" (the case of "Art in Prague" is presented further in the chapter on Prague) foreseen by the organizers for the 12-15 May 1995 is going to show that.

The event is coordinated by the National Gallery in Prague with cooperation with Museum of the Applied Arts and Czech Art in Prague. Sponsored by the European Community Cultural Division it should allow an opportunity for welcoming guests for commercial dealing in the environment of Prague. There is no doubt that many changes are needed and the "art market as such" is really just emerging in Eastern Europe but work on the improvement of the art promotion has already started. The stability of the market also requires a more affluent society and more well organized auctions and shows in order to establish a proper spread of prices, which may compete with the controlled prices for the same works in the West. This will take at least half a decade, but the recognition of the old and new friends in changing Europe should be set in train now. There is a huge potential and a great deal of work to be done to bring back to glamour Central Europe, but it will be rewarding to see it happening.

Notes:

1. Interview with Michael March, Director of the Book Fair, Avencourt Exhibitions Ltd, London, June 1994.
2. Joanna Bayle, 'FIAC-optimistic come back': Art & Business, No 11/12, Dialog Ltd, Poznan, 1993.
3. Art Cologne, 'Come back of collectors': Art & Business, No 11/12, Dialog Ltd, Poznan, 1993.
4. Interview with Benjamin Rhodes, Director of the Benjamin Rhodes Gallery in London, Hamburg, December 1993.
5. Interview with J. Giombetti, Art dealer in London and New York, Polish Business Centre, London, February 1994.
6. Special meeting with Levi-Strauss in Kunstverein during the First Eastern European Art Fair, Hamburg, December 1993.
7. *ibid.* 6
8. Interview with Stefania Piga, Director of Spicchi del'Este Gallery in Rome, Hamburg, December 1993.
9. Interview with Rudolf Zwirner, Director of Zwirner Intermarketing, organizer of the First Eastern European Art Fair in Hamburg, December 1993.
10. Interview with Hans Knoll, Director of the Knoll Gallery in Vienna, Bonn, May 1994.
11. Interview with Jan Cerny, Director of the MXM Gallery in Prague, Hamburg, December 1993.
12. Interview with Karl Nordenhake, Director of the Karl Nordenhake Gallery in Stockholm, Hamburg, December '93.
13. Interview with Stefania Piga, Director of the Spicchi del'Este Gallery in Rome, Hamburg, December 1993.
14. Interview with B.Ucher, Director of the Ucher Gallery in Cologne, Hamburg, December 1993.
15. Christoph Brockhaus, 'A change of perspective in Modern European Art', Press Pack, Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, May 1994.
16. Ryszard Stanislawski, 'On the exhibition', Press Pack, Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, May 1994.

## CHAPTER 5.

### International formal and informal institutions facilitating the East/West cultural integration.

According to Bruno de Witte : "Integration can, generally speaking be measured in three different ways : in terms of social interaction, in terms of political decision making and in terms of common identity or consciousness. Accordingly, West European integration in the field of culture may also be assessed along those three dimensions."

In comparison, the assessment of the East-West cultural integration will be more complicated although the scales of measurement will remain the same. The difficulty lies in the early stages of the idea on the official level and at a far more advanced stage on the informal level. Cultural circles, inspite of the severe restriction on the Eastern side, have been cooperating throughout 1970's and even in the 1980's in Poland. In the later phases bilateral cultural agreements between Western countries on cultural exchanges have eased the situation slightly. Nevertheless the political climate has changed completely after 1989 and governmental bodies of the Central European countries as well as the representatives of the European Communities had to take into consideration, that difficult issue of incorporating into their cultural agreements the "other Europeans" (non-member states).(1).

The problem has been very important because, unlike North America where cultural interaction has always been based on informal cultural flows, countries like Poland, Czech and Slovak Republic need to be included in well written cultural

policy of the bilateral relations and sub-systems of the European Union. The benefit for the Central European countries in making their path towards full membership into EU is definitely indisputable. Secondly as "the cultural links cut across political and economic links" integration itself would strengthen overall progress of those countries.

The desirability of an open path towards the progress has always been recognized within the economic sector. Therefore this path is the one firstly served by the EC aid to Central and Eastern Europe in the PHARE (Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Reconstruction of the Economy) programme designed for Poland, Hungary, expanded and now including the Czech & Slovak Republic's, Romania, Albania, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia. In 1990 sector programmes were launched to meet "the necessity of the most urgent needs."(2).

However programmes developed since 1991 have been "able to focus on long term objectives". Assistance has been provided within programmes such as the Structural Development in Selected Regions (Poland- STRUDER) and Support for the Implementation of the Europe Agreement (SIERRA). "There are joint agreements which have an indefinite period of validity and cover Community and national spheres of competence".(3) Yet it is only in 1992 when "for the first time, in addition to the aspects concerning commercial and economic cooperation, the political dialogue dimension and a cultural cooperation component are taken into account".(4) Finally the "cultural component" has been taken into consideration within the set of the European Agreements with the Czech & Slovak Republics,

Hungary and Poland. Promotion of cultural cooperation has not been defined by the document but at this stage gained its verbal place among the important issues. Ratification of the programme have taken a relatively long time but eventually provided a statutory base for the inclusion of non-member states in Europe into a variety of projects. One of them is the "Kaleidoscope scheme" organized by the Commission of the European Community. Within the statutory aims of the programme we read that: "As part of its action in culture, the Community contributes to promoting knowledge of the various cultures of the Member States and greater awareness with the common cultural heritage".(5)

Therefore three types of action have been so far identified as valuable fields for the projects. In 1993 the scheme was aiming to support:

- innovatory cultural events with a European dimension

(Action 1);

- to encourage artistic and cultural creation (...) mobility and further training of creative and performing artists

(Action 2);

- to promote cultural cooperation through networks (Action 3).

It is clear that the programme has been designed for the Member States, but the "events involving partners from countries in Central and Eastern Europe are also eligible".(6) Therefore it is possible to say that a certain "loophole " for non-member States has been provided and this situation reflects almost exactly the legislative situation. Future partners are recognized but as at the formal level all the



initiatives take a long time. That is why so far there are no official invitations to such projects, though "back doors are provided". The same can be said about other scheme run by the Commission called "Platform Europe".(7) This award scheme provides both financial and non-financial assistance for a wide variety of artistic and cultural events which have a European dimension. Entries must involve at least three member-states in order to get funding and in order to invite a non-member partner from Central and Eastern Europe.

It is impossible for application to be made directly by the Gallery or by an independent curator from a non-member State. The only organization which has in its statutory aims a focus on the cooperation East/West is the European Cultural Foundation. Established by Robert Schuman, Denis de Rougemont and Hendrik Brugmans in 1954 to promote cultural cooperation among people and institutions throughout whole continent, it covers not only arts but also aspects of the European society, education and the media. Governed by an international Board of Governors, it maintains close contacts with Council of Europe and Commission of European Communities, European Parliament and Unesco.

Following the Tenth Declaration of the Board of Governors in 1987, priority was given for five years (priority ended in 1992) to projects which involve the participation in organizations in Eastern and Central Europe. However in 1991, no special fund was created using an accelerated procedure to support projects originating from Central and Eastern Europe, as happened in 1990. Later as the current policy changed, the



interest in Central Europe has been diverted into the problems arising in the Mediterranean region.(8) It is true that European Cultural Foundation has never been "primarily involved in the arts side of the cultural affairs", but at least it devoted considerable attention and priority to the easing of cultural exchanges with Poland and the Czech Republic.

A statutory law of the Foundation already in 1992 required "at least 3 member-States to make the project eligible for funding", but were more accommodating to the non-member states to the point that through the networks of the European City of Culture. The Polish City of Cracow obtained support to hold the European Cultural Month in June 1992.(9)

One of the most thoughtful ideas in order to contribute to more spontaneous exchanges is the launching of the "Apex Fund", Arts Mobility for Central and Eastern Europe, enabling individual artists and arts organizers from the Western countries to make the initial contacts personally. With the understanding that lack of hard currency and visa problems are the biggest obstacles which slow development of the individual contacts on non-institutional level, the European Cultural Foundation decided to resolve the situation. The idea is simple, to help the interested parties to meet for the planning and exploring of collaborative, cooperative projects directly in Poland, Russia or the Czech Republic. As the Foundation stresses: "...the climate leaves little room for initiatives to develop from this region, (Central/Eastern Europe) and most travel exchange is largely dependent upon

invitations by Western-based initiatives." (10) This idea is specially valuable from the point of view of encouraging Western arts organizers to look for the partnerships and networks. As said before, it is very simple and relatively inexpensive idea, but by providing direct support from the Institution to non-formal organizations or individuals in this case seems to be the perfect answer to the need for improved direct communication and collaboration between artists and organizers from Eastern and Western Europe. The benefits are seen immediately, and this speed is definitely what is needed. Just on the basis of these few examples, we can see how difficult it is at a formal level to introduce and support a country which is not yet a member-State. The type of legislation introduced so far automatically creates an obstacle for those trying to join the network or trying to join individual projects involving institutions or independent organizations from Poland or Hungary. Overall, it is also possible to say that the system does not support individual ideas at all, and that attention is given only to the group projects, which in some cases is highly artificial, even when working in international dimension. Eligibility is that restrictive. The other misleading aspect of the whole chain for the facilitating of the cultural integration network is its very non-artistic angle. In many cases "arts" within the programmes of such organization take back place after media, publishing or translating projects. Among nearly three dozen of the organizations serving within the network of the European Cultural Foundation, only the European Foundation

Centre in Brussels mentions European Culture as one of its major programme activities. In addition the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (IMW) aims to balance opportunities and aims to engage in its projects not only scholars and intellectuals but also artists from Eastern Europe to meet and work with "their counterparts from the West".(11)

Trying to assess the situation and the chance for professional interaction instigated and orchestrated by the organizations specialising in arts exchange throughout the European continent is almost impossible. Due to the funding and swinging interests based on the urgent needs rising in Europe, different sectors and countries are being served. That is definitely a positive aspect but unfortunately in all those speedy modifications the arts section is being regularly underestimated and undeserved. The situation becomes even more complicated if we are to take into consideration that for the first time in the European policy document (The Maastricht Treaty - Article 128) a Cultural Clause is being inserted and cultural importance is being recognized.(12)

Looking at the arts, we are attempting to highlight one of the aspects of culture, which in its broad meaning includes not only art and media but science and education. Therefore to defend the arts section is definitely even more difficult. Nevertheless highlighting such a problem is no doubt extremely important, because of its timing and due to dangers of "negligence when it comes to arts". It is especially dangerous in that, within the formal and informal cultural interactions, it is "arts" and "media" which can be so helpful integrating

East/West.

Other remarks are also worth making when we look into the organizations run by the law providing bodies in new Europe, like the Commission of the European Communities. The immediate comment is that unfortunately there is a great lack of practical answers for quickly furthering smaller initiatives and assisting bodies like non-governmental institutions for whom defined cultural (including arts) action would greatly help. However, many things are being done by the regional initiatives, and inspite of the secondary treatment of the arts, international projects like the exhibition "3X3" from Fruit Market Gallery mounted to commemorate the anniversary of the town-twinning between Munich and Edinburgh, is a touring exhibition and will be travelling to Poland. This is definitely one bright spot where the cultural organizations at the District Council level and Kulturreferat are capable of global thinking.

It is to be regretted that another chance of far reaching cultural cooperation does not involve "arts"; this is the "Ouverture" programme co-funded by the Commission of Europe and managed by the regions of Strathclyde, Piemonte, Saarland and Asturias. (13)

What kind of organization on the European level secures than the development of the full cultural dimension? This is the question which comes to mind after the picture of the lack of the infrastructures which could facilitate unstoppable growth towards free flows of culture all over Europe.

An organization called the European Forum for the Arts

and Heritage, has been given the brief to rectify the situation. Just last year in Copenhagen (14-16 May 1993) the organization held its first assembly, having being supported by the European Cultural Foundation, the French Association Nationale pour la Formation et l'Information Artistiques et Culturelles (ANFIAC), The British Council, the Pepinieres Europeennes pour Jeunes Artistes (Paris offices) and the UK National Campaign for the Arts. This seems for the first time to be a really promising institution emerging for the encouraging of an atmosphere of cultural vitality "within the remit of the European Commission".(14) Its aim is precisely to raise the status of the arts and heritage within the European Parliament and Commission. The organization is mainly a policy-making body, replacing the institutions which had earlier on undermined the importance of the arts and heritage.

Established to support the role of artists and their place in developing European society, EFAH will discuss and evaluate the policies proposed by the European institutions. Simultaneously, the organization offers information, supervision and a valid voice as European institution ensuring that cultural actions and proposals are as beneficial as possible for arts circles. EFAH provides a powerful voice in the international decision making centre, as its members are from all the areas of the arts involved in administration and presentation. Membership has also been open for individual venues and companies, although without voting rights and as associates. Full membership is open to national and European-wide associations of professionals representing the interests

of particular sectors of the arts and heritage. Therefore the door for the Central European members is wide open without any restrictions. Again on that high, nearly "parliamentary" level, this is the first institution inviting participants without political and bureaucratic obstacles. Apart from that, EFAH concentrates on the projects of the immediate use such as the survey for the Dutch Government about European Community policies and programmes which concern the arts directly.(15)

This organization has already made an important move by making a representation on the needs of cultural organizations to the Council of Culture Ministers at December's (1992) European Summit. Other important parliamentary action has been initiated by the presentation of the Memorandum on the use of the Maastricht Treaty Cultural Clause to the Community institutions. Hopefully, this organization and actions already instigated will help to keep the "arts" in focus with other European problems on an equal basis. Supported by the national organizations from other European countries directly, like the National Campaign for the Arts or the French ANFIAC, it might remain resistant against bureaucracy and the ridiculous rivalries between institutions involved in European affairs. Involved in helping with the structuring and communication between high powered policy-making institutions and its Europe-wide members, EFAH should provide a missing link between world of formal institutions and its non-formal counterparts. This should bring more down to "earth" all the policy-making centres EFAH has been discussing directly with its members such problems as: the role of the artists in

Europe and European policy and culture; European policies affecting the cultural sector (including the cultural cooperation with non-EC countries, free movement of cultural goods); the role of the European Community institutions; and the outlook for European cultural policy after Maastricht. In another words topics like community cultural policy vis-a-vis national cultural policy are being discussed on an equal basis as needs of the international arts community, and as areas of immediate action towards a strategy for further cooperation. These are the problems which did not get much of a hearing before. But as EFAH can also more negatively be seen as yet another great institution trying to restructure a slowly working system and as adding one more level to communication, it will be interesting to see if it can become the natural alliance not just another obstacle.

"Like all systems, either at the national or international levels" - by Simon Mundy the president of EFAH, "it only moves when you kick it.... Making the agenda cultural can be done over the next two years, using the Council and Unesco, for example. We should be asking for money and access to knowledge. Unlike some sectors of the Community, the arts can easily justify the public expenditure; demonstrating what is done with the money (....) The European Parliament recommends that at least 1% of the budget should be spent in the cultural field; the hope is that the much smaller amount which is actually spent will begin to rise with the Maastricht Treaty. Money should not go to fund jamborees and conferences, but on artist's residencies, exchanges, educational contacts



and projects." (16)

With that kind of very realistic thinking, it might be that the benefits from the campaigning for art and heritage will directly reach the artists as well. Each level of cultural interaction could have a chance to be the subject of attention. This new situation, with full recognition of the arts within the wide European territory, gives a important freedom of action for the Central/Eastern European artists with rights of eligibility to funds and participation in international projects if successfully implanted the aims of EFAH may help to make a "mile step" towards European cultural integration. At the moment this is the most advanced institution simultaneously working so closely with the Commission of the European Communities. Otherwise among the strictly governmental organization there are only institutions serving as part of the network, which in their statutory programme facilitate the cultural section, but not necessarily meaning the "arts".

The Council of Europe is without a policy of its own. As an intergovernmental organization, operating almost exclusively by means of conventions and recommendations with the field of activity restricted to certain areas like human rights, culture and social problems, it has not managed to come up with helpful framework for the purposes of regulating of cultural relations with Central and Eastern Europe. Lately the involvement in culture by the Commission of the European Communities provided a fuller range of solutions.

Unfortunately, due to the economic problems and the



complexity of solving the "cultural affairs" situation, this institution has not managed to resolve the principal problems concerning improvement of the conditions within the arts sector. One of the most interesting initiatives instigated by the Council of Europe with the conjunction with Council for Cultural Co-operation was "Promotion of cultural creativity and dissemination" - Conference on "Artists and Markets" organized in Budapest (Hungary) on 17th-20th March 1994.(17)

The conference focused on changing the working conditions of the artists in the former "Eastern Block countries" and concentrated on the problems of adaptation for the artists in the new economic environment of the so-called free-market.

This was the first conference of a kind where the Council of Europe decided to gather Central and Eastern European artists as well as Western art organizers from variety of sections (from the media and arts management, and arts council officials from Denmark, Great Britain, and academics) to discuss the solutions for increasingly difficult economic situation in artistic circles in the East. What was very important and promising was that the guests came up with a good understanding of the situation of the countries trying to obtain EU membership and improving all their democratic structures. There was no doubt among the guests of the conference that the difficult situation will last for at least another five years, and in some countries, like Russia and Romania, will persist even longer before any reliable structures will emerge. Nevertheless under those circumstances it was stressed that the most important are the cooperation

between the artists in the country and their initiatives in building their own enterprises, working out distribution of artistic works and activating their associations and unions to protect their interest. The round table brought discussions on need for immediate help in case of Albania. What was most important was that discussions were addressed directly to and for artistic circles in Poland or Slovakia and Hungary. There was a clear demand on the part of the organizers for an action and active participation of artistic circles in their own countries. The actual taking over of the initiatives by the newly created associations or even non-formal organizations competent to take on board problems of the art world in the countries themselves became vital to continue the international dialogue concerning cultural integration.(18)

Actions taken by the Council of Europe and by the Commission of the European Communities often are the subject of the fierce rivalry "rather than subject of developing coherent forms of regulation".(19) This conference was in a way one of the few initiatives trying to respond immediately to the problems which have arisen. In this case activation of awareness of the artists of their role in influencing cultural development was essential. There is a great need for that kind of action.

More effective as policy-making centres and places directed towards international projects are such recent organisations as the European Citizen's Action Service and the Regional Council. Having looked at the Regional Council, for example, we move further down the ladder but this is

surprisingly where more happens, as the successful implantation of the ideas is more likely to happen. Observing the lower levels of the world of the institutions we may say that the intergovernmental bodies like the Council of Cultural Co-operation provide by their initiatives more opportunity to examine policy in action. As an example, we can look at the organization of the European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres, which recognizes the priority area for cultural co-operation between Western and Eastern Europe. "Work carried out (....) has highlighted the key role played by professionals associated with local and regional political decision making and by those responsible for implementing area-based cultural policies. This project as well as the organization seem to be the closest to merging effectively theory and practice".(20) Although that kind of activity would not be expected by the main policy-making institutions nevertheless it is interesting to discover that at the lower levels some of the institutions are trying to do that.

One of them is the European Council of Artists (ECA), a type of umbrella organization (and so-called the "platform institution") was established recently in June 1993 at the European round table, hosted by the Council of Danish Artists, with support of Nordic Council of Ministers, Danish Ministry of Culture and Council of Europe. The organization aims to cooperate with "political decision-makers of Europe " as well as working with artists and smaller organisations, at the same time bridging the formal and informal levels of the

institutions. The most interesting project emerged in the statutory aims when the ECA described its role also as "helping in creating structures and networks in the countries where such structures do not exist yet at the national level". In the changing Europe, such an organization has a very important role to play, especially in that its policy is based on the UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of the Artist, stressing the need for "accentuating the role of artists, through responsible dialogue with national, international and European instances".(21) Furthermore the organisation has already expressed its interest and understanding of the problems concerning legal protection and social security for the artists, and support for artists in Central Europe in general. The European Council of Artists although it is a newly established organisation, seems to fill the gap for an international institution to "sustain dialogue between artists in all disciplines and political decision-makers", in order to ensure the development of the arts section on a wider European territory.

A similar institution devoted solely to the arts, without any discriminating statutory regulations against non-member States, and dedicated to the task of cultural integration, seems to be European League of Institutes of the Arts established in October 1990 in Amsterdam. The founding conference in Amsterdam included 80 representatives from Eastern and Central Europe, based on the close relationships with the organizers of the "Erasmus" and "Tempus" programmes of the EC to support development and renewal of the higher

education system. This very important activity aims to "provide a more favourable environment for art and art education". The idea rooted within the educational programme works on building a lobby for art and art education by orchestrating international projects, such as short term events: an exhibition for art students from 8 European cities; a photo competition and exhibition for ELIA member students; and assistance for European Festival of Arts (COEFA).(22)

Discussions and conferences where the issues like the improvement of exchanges for students and teachers in art education between Western and Central/Eastern European countries are being targeted, as well as the status and interpretation of the basic values for art and art education in changing Europe. The programmes are making great progress. Ambitions for global thinking and global responsibility are also being expressed, which provides very strong ground for any kind of cultural interaction. It is important to remark that this is the reason why open-minded and well prepared policies are urgently awaited from European institutions so that the enthusiasm and understanding of all the cultural issues already expressed by non-formal and non-governmental institutions will have an opportunity to be facilitated extended further to reach wider Europe and the world.

ELIA, apart from concentrating on the purely professional issues of promotion of the cooperation between students and teachers of academic institutes of arts throughout Europe, actually looks into the problems of defending the diversity of cultures, stimulating communication between European and non-

European cultures, maintaining adequate social and political conditions of free development in the arts and of art production, and defending such needs in education in the arts and art production as singularity, imagination, creativity.(23)

As a lobby ELIA has a chance to gain policy making or rather opinion-forming power, which has already been shown in the charter of European art education produced after the 1992 Strasbourg general assembly and conference. The Charter included recommendations and requests to the European Community, the Council of Europe and National Governments. In two years, it managed to gather art institutes from all over Europe, including Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. Structural cooperation developed by formal and non-formal networks, allow the spread of ideas by to the wider European information and communication channels. Existence of such a quickly growing lobby, aware of its needs and ready to act as "soft policy centre", is highly significant. The situation precisely shows the taking of initiatives by the bodies further down the ladder, in contrast to the very laggardly movement by the grander official institutions. Not surprisingly the emerging ideas are given, a hearing not by moving from the grand institutions through the most powerful channels to the lower bodies but the other way round, as various regional, national or specific "audio-visual cultural institutions" try to make their way up to the level of more global realisation. Examples are the National Campaign for the Arts and the British Council which, with others, financially

supported The European Forum for Arts & Heritage.

That kind of direct cooperation from the national into international level brings other aspects reinforcement. Organizations themselves try to give a lead, not only waiting for the European institutions to impose their own solutions. Central/Eastern European counterparts have not been fully represented by their own institutions in the international forum, but non-member States have other institutions speaking for their rights. Firstly there is the British Council, pointing out the need for helping with the realisation of "multilateral and cooperative initiatives", helping also with "breaking down the internal cultural barriers created in countries by restrictive practices and by traditional separation art forms along the lines of the old guilds"(24) and finally "advice and help with the establishment of strong, autonomous institutions to act as a deterrent to the encroachment of political and economic influence, and ward off the ever-present dangers of cultural colonialism".(25)

There were points in the programme which had in the first place assured the existence of cultural institutions and cultural circles capable of taking on board not only the idea of structure and policy in the new political situation in the country but also the ability to give a valid voice to the wider European problems within culture. Today specifically in Central Europe great progress has been made in past few years. If we concentrate on the priorities of the Central European side, these are the policy-making centres in the political field and the goal of getting full membership of the EC.



A lot of work has been definitely done towards a coherent cultural policy by the governmental body in Poland, the Ministry of Culture and Art, which tries to balance its policy against the important issues in the West and need of cooperation with former Soviet Union States like Ukraine, Lithuania or Latvia.

Nevertheless situation is not easy, because there are a few helpful structures and institutions specially operating for European integration. In Warsaw with, the support of the PHARE programme the offices of the European Integration were opened, which shows the growth of the programme, but when it comes to the actions supporting the idea the most significant are the project of town-twinning and idea of the Cultural Month held in Cracow. Of course the European Institutes for the Arts (ELIA) also plays important and immediate role in strengthening the cooperation with Western counterparts.

There are many initiatives in the conjunction with intergovernmental and international bodies from "outside" Poland, but if we look for the policy-making centres which would act on behalf artistic circles on the international stage we will find mainly foundations facilitating cultural sector more generally. As for today the only organisation in Poland with an ability to present recommendations for the cultural policy as an advisor on the governmental level is the Institute of Culture.(26) Seminars are held in four cycles every year to discuss the conceptions of cultural policy, and the effects of the transformation of the economic system on culture. Discussions include the search for new financial

resources and new institutions within the culture and for a culture capable of partnership with the Western counterparts. Members of the Cultural Institute have made addresses at the Parliament, where the recommendations, proposals and outcomes of the researches were heard and taken into consideration. The final framework for the functioning of the culture is realised in the Parliament not anywhere else. Great help under those circumstances is provided by other institutions of lesser power, like the Academy of Fine Arts or the Association or the Association of Polish Artists, who add their voice to the discussions. The same can be said about the Czech and Slovak Republic where the transformation towards the dynamic functioning of culture in "parliamentary democracy and the market economy " is in progress.

In Poland, in the Czech and Slovak Republic and in Hungary the most effective body has been the Soros Foundation (in Poland called Batory Foundation) when it comes to the active promotion of art and active restructuring of the activity of international networking, information and documentation of the contemporary art. It is an institution devoted to facilitating international cultural exchanges and international cooperation. Soros Centres for Contemporary Arts opened in Bratislava, Bucharest, Budapest, Tallin, Prague, Warsaw building an impressive chain of networks within Central/Eastern European countries, providing at the same time strong partners for the seeking of dialogues with EC institutions. With time and experience, and improved information, SCCA should gain a very professional insight to

the conditions and needs of the artistic circles.(27) Therefore this new lobby, through the initiatives of its members, hopefully will instigate soon an established policy-making body which would not only serve the intergovernmental institutions but even replace them by virtue of its expertise of the cultural affairs. Otherwise we will have only foundations, which provide the sources of funding, like the Foundation of the Polish Culture (looking mainly after the historic monuments), the Foundation for Poland (representing the Foundation de France (general cultural projects), the US-originated Kosciuszko Foundation, and the private Foundation of Piotr Buchner.(28) Such foundations will help the artistic circles to be more resilient against the "particular political and economic interest", but will not give them voice at the international forum. So, unsurprisingly, these countries still in a way rely on the open-minded foreign associations, like the National Arts Association UK, which sits on the Advisory Council of the National Campaign for the Arts and votes for the inclusion of Central/Eastern European countries in the UNESCO campaign.

The task of cultural integration based on the long term agreements is more complicated than ever. Previously collaborations between one formal institution from the West, like the IFA (Institute fur Auslandsbeziehungen) from Stuttgart working with Muzeum of Modern Art from Lodz was by its scope able to answer the needs of both parties.(29)

Today in the atmosphere of integrating Europe and emerging new partners very much more developed coordination is

needed. Any plan to coordinate free interactions Europe-wide puts a lot of demands on all parties, and the situation is additionally very complicated due to recent formal recognition of "cultural affairs" and unresolved structural situation within EC itself. On the Eastern side the well known problem of identifying the responsible and competent institutions also remains not fully resolved and the status of the non-member associates of the EC does not help the situation either.

There are many gaps in the communication and information in policy-making processes, which need to be filled in order to support long term international cooperation. The solution which comes to mind immediately is the provision of precise information on the needs of the art world in each country which would provide a base for policy for wider Europe. Such information would mean that the national problems could potentially be identified and solved by the international funding sources. The idea of offering international support in cases foreseen by the policy of the organizations may work best exactly at the levels where the governments on national level fail to act. But to achieve this, as has been mentioned before, there must be very strong lobbying institution gathering information from the existing national level members, who know very well their problems.

It is going to be specially important to monitor all the changes in administration, economy, social practices and law, which affect the situation of artists. The importance of the adequate publications or magazines specifically addressed to seeking new opportunities should not be underestimated.

The implications would mainly address the Central/Eastern European countries, which by not speaking effectively for themselves lose the possibility of obtaining large amounts of money, for instance from the PHARE. Apparently money for culture can be obtained but there must be a need for it expressed by the interested parties in the country.(30)

Hopefully, the awakenings at the East will match the improvements in the West concerning the mutual interest in giving arts valid voice in the European Parliament.

As Europe still is "an unfinished symphony" as described by Willy Cleese (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium) "appropriate transitional arrangements will be necessary which will require very complex negotiations".(31)

In order to draw conclusions, which would help to highlight the importance of the cultural agenda in the process of the European integration in the current situation of "major integration deficit" (32), we must recognise the importance of the overall political climate and practical needs of the people represented by those political structures, especially when it concerns the artistic circles.

As well as on the part of the European political institutions, the need for the free flow of information and communication is essential in the cultural organisation aiming for wide international co-operation. In this case the coordination of effective communication among the professionals, including linguistic communication and publications, is vital.(33)

Secondly the initiative on the part of the non-governmental bodies, even on the regional level in case of the Central European countries, is specially critical in entering meaningful multilateral relationships. These are the most common problems waiting to be solved in order to continue the building of European Cultural integration.

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Illustrations/Plates:

Chapter 1.

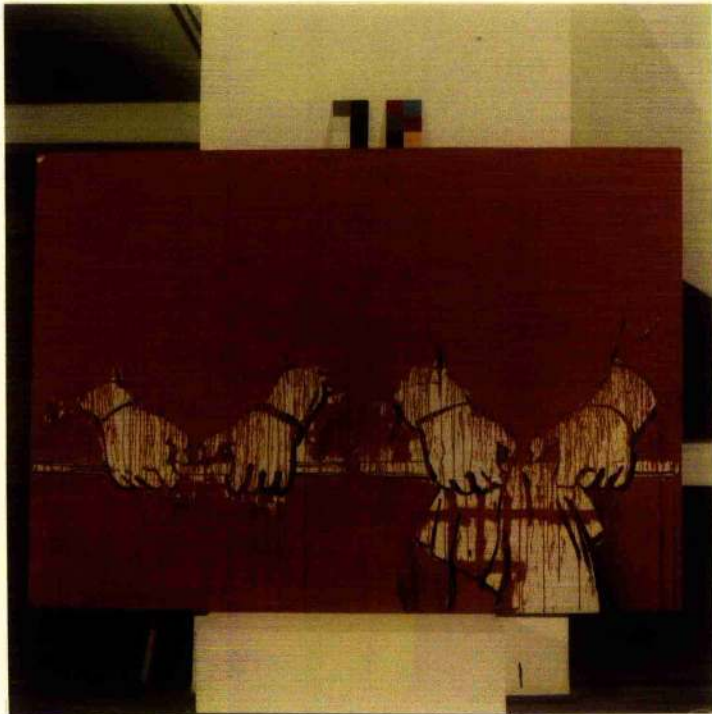
1. Włodzimierz Pawlak, Breaking of the glass tubes, 1987, oil on canvas, 135 x 185cm, photo Anna Pietrzak Bartos, Courtesy Zacheta Gallery Warsaw.
2. Włodzimierz Pawlak, Sterile container under the control of the authorities, 1985, oil on packing paper, 195 x 204cm, photo Anna Pietrzak-Bartos, Courtesy Zacheta Gallery, Warsaw.
3. Mirosław Balka, Object '367 x 241 x 25', 1993, Polish Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Courtesy Mirosław Balka.
4. Włodzimierz Pawlak, Malevich (monochromatic), 1992, oil on canvas, 135 x 190cm, Courtesy Włodzimierz Pawlak.
5. Włodzimierz Pawlak, Malevich (colour), 1992, oil on canvas 135 x 190cm, Courtesy Włodzimierz Pawlak.
6. Włodzimierz Pawlak, Alphabet of Strzemiński, 1991, oil on canvas, 130 x 120cm, Courtesy Włodzimierz Pawlak.
7. Zbigniew Libera, The Bather, 1991, plexiglas, rubber, aluminium, TV-set, VHS conductors, kinescope lamp, photo Mikołaj Malinowski, Courtesy Zbigniew Libera.
8. Zbigniew Libera, Segment of the signal, 1993, aluminium oscilloscope lamp, plexiglas, photo Grzegorz Olech, Courtesy Zbigniew Libera.
9. Paweł Althamer, The Boat, 1991, metal approx. 2mm, photo Rafał Szambelan, Courtesy Paweł Althamer.

Chapter 2.

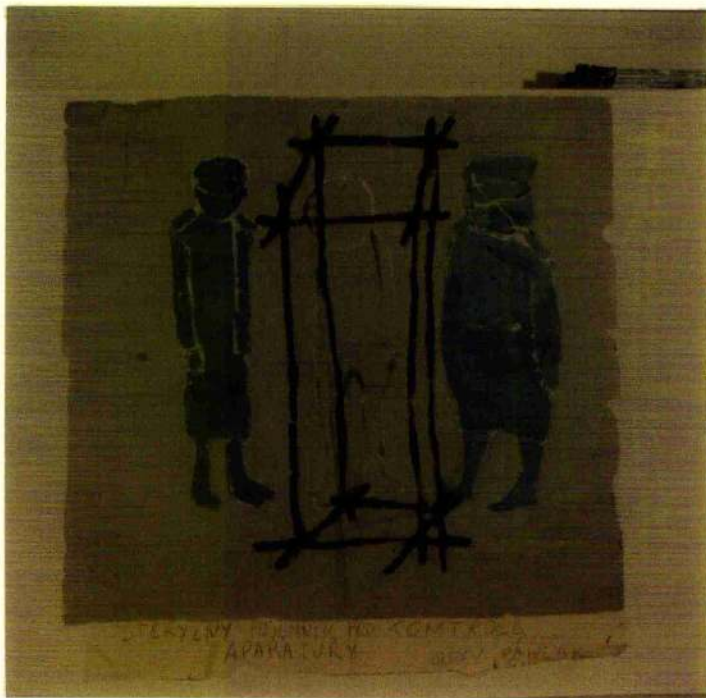
10. Václav Bostik, Structure of the field, 1967, oil on canvas, 91 x 100cm, National Gallery, Prague, photo Milan Posselt.
11. Milena Dopitová, Four masks, 1992, photography, 140 x 102cm, Courtesy MXM Gallery, Prague.
12. Petr Lysacek, The criminal case - Lena's, Charles's and John's tattoo, 1993, photography and Roentgen slides, Courtesy MXM Gallery, Prague.

Chapter 3.

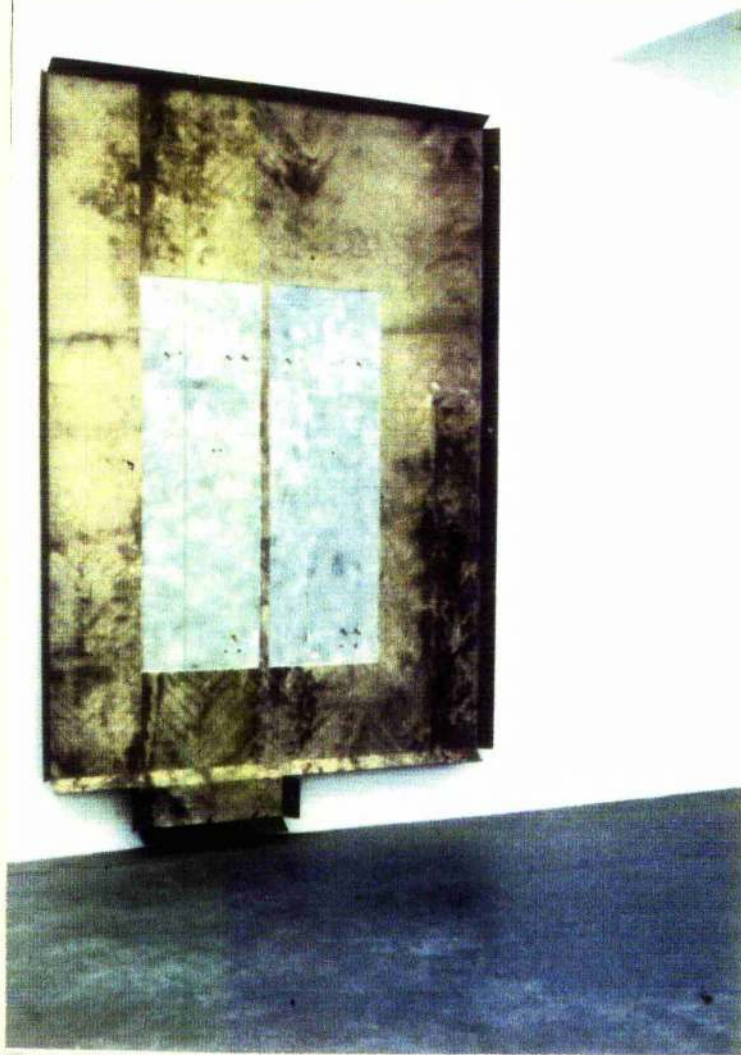
13. Roman Opalka, 1 Detail. 1-35327, acryl on canvas, 196 x 135cm, Muzeum Sztuki Lodz.
14. Magdalena Jetelova, House, 1984, wood, red fogg, 256 x 125 x 200cm, State Gallery in Schwabia, photo Philipp Schonborn.
15. Magdalena Abakanowicz, Humanity 4, 1989/1990, 14 sculptures, juta, jucca, 175 x 60 x 30cm, photo Artur Starewicz.



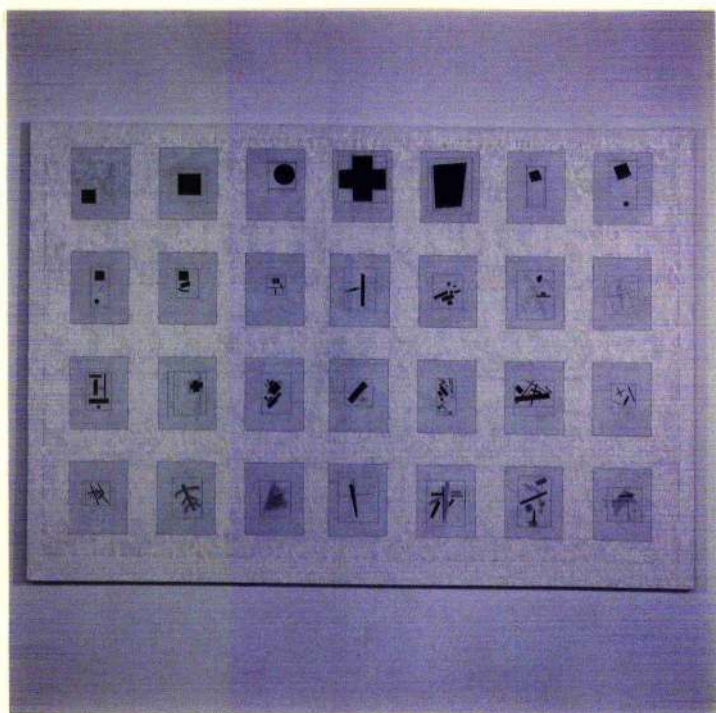
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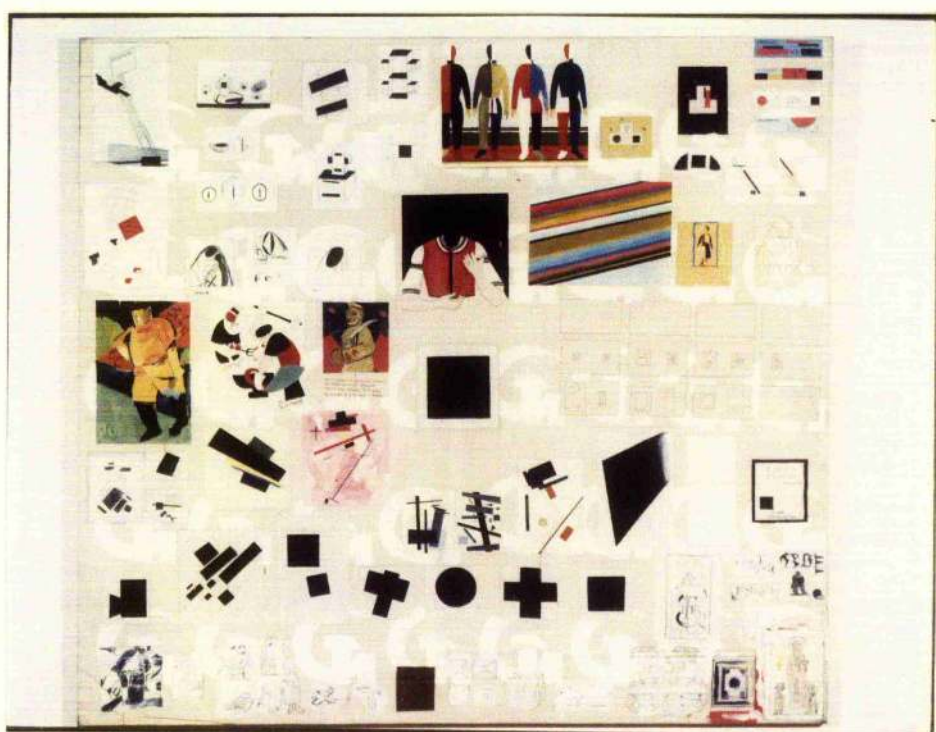
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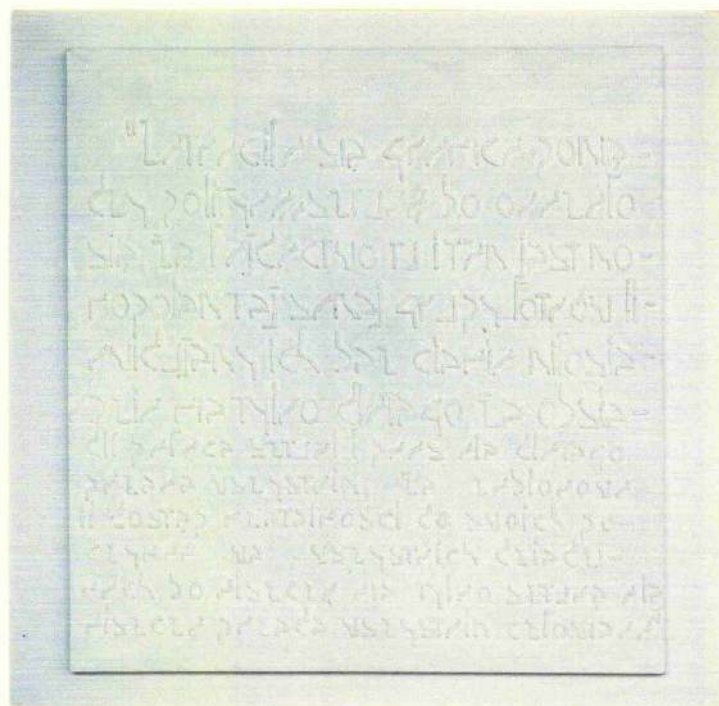


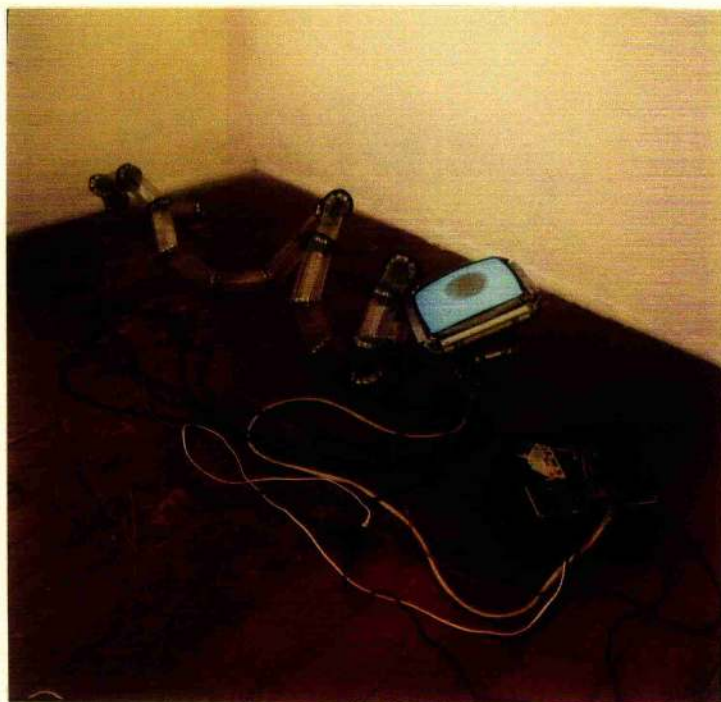
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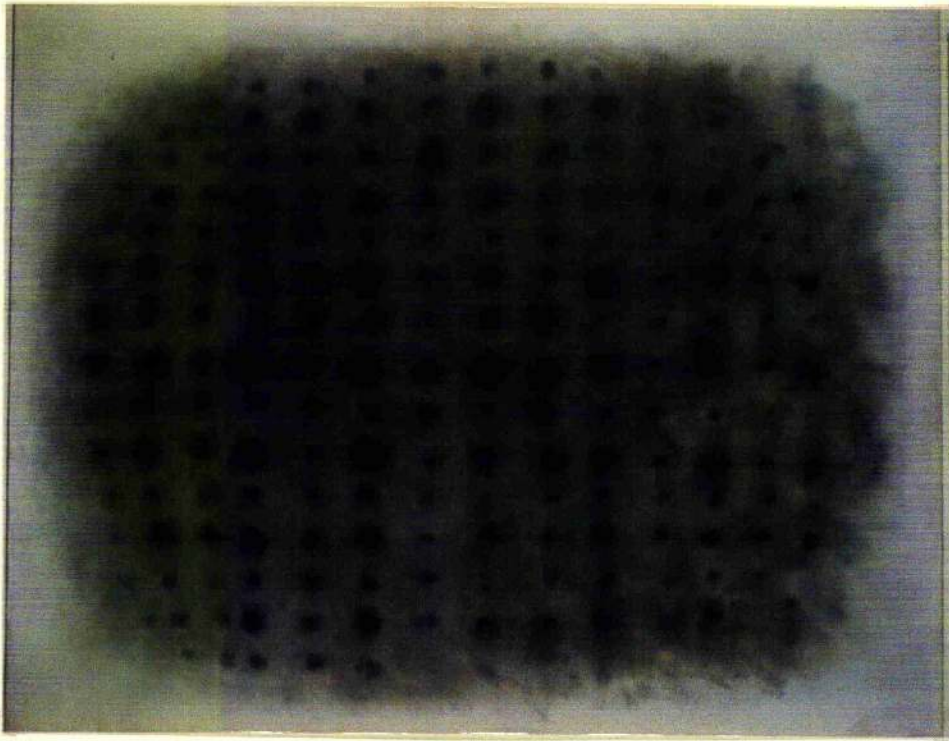


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